

WILD WEST



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Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S MASCOT!

OR, THE DOG THAT WANTED A MASTER.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



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YOUNG WILD WEST'S MASCOT;

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The Dog that Wanted a Master.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DOG THAT WANTED A MASTER.

It was a pleasant spring day in the year 1878.

On the bank of the Sweetwater River in Western Wyoming a company of United States cavalry were encamped.

Judging by the general appearance of the men it looked as though they had been having a hard time.

More than a dozen were wounded, and half a dozen able-bodied fellows were digging graves on the sandy elevation just back of the camp.

The truth of it was that the troopers had had a hard fight.

That morning at daybreak they had been attacked by a band of Indians and white renegades, and being outnumbered two to one, the brave Boys in Blue had been forced to mount and flee, leaving a dozen dead and dying behind them.

But fortunately they were not pursued very far, and it was just at noon that they found a camping place well protected by a growth of timber in the rear, and fronted by the Sweetwater River.

Five of the wounded died on the way, one of whom was the captain, and it now fell to the lot of the lieutenant to take command of the men.

The lieutenant's name was Lefferts, and he appeared to be a bright fellow of thirty, a born fighter, and there was a sinister look in his eyes.

The spot where they were camped was about twenty miles

from the eastern end of what was then called the Great South Pass.

This pass cut through the Green River Mountain Range and was a memorable spot, as in days gone by many a family of emigrants had been ambushed and murdered there by Indians.

At the time of which we write it was still dreaded. Not only hostile Indians made it a place to commit their depredations, but white men who chose to plunder and pillage

This particular troop of cavalry had been sent out from Fort Casper along the old pony express route to meet a troop from Fort Bridger. They were to join in making a search of the Green River Range for an expert Government surveyor named Professor Rathbun, who was supposed to be held captive by a band of Sioux Indians and white renegades.

They had with them three of the greatest scouts of the times, but unfortunately for them, these had gone on ahead a few hours before the attack had been made on the cavalry, otherwise they might not have been forced to mount and flee from the Indians and whites.

"I have an idea," said Lieutenant Lefferts, speaking to the officers under him, "that the band that attacked us is the very one we have been looking for. I would be willing to take an affidavit that I saw a big giant of a half-breed who acted as a leader, though it was not light enough to see very good when the captain gave the order to mount and make for cover."

"I, too, saw him, lieutenant," spoke up a corporal. "Ac-

cording to the description we have received, it was surely Blackpowder Dan."

"I think there can be no mistake about it," resumed the lieutenant. "It is too bad that our scouts were not there! Young Wild West, alone, is worth a dozen in a scrimmage of that kind."

"And Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart are worth another dozen," added the surgeon, who had come up, after having finished dressing the wounds of the men.

"Those are true words, if true words have ever been spoken," said the second lieutenant. "If Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, had been with us when the attack was made, I feel confident in saying that we would have won the battle, and our captain might have been alive yet."

The speaker looked hard at his superior when he finished.

But whatever that glance meant, it was not noticed by Lieutenant Lefferts.

"It is time our scouts were showing up, anyhow," he said, after a pause. "Young Wild West said they would be back before noon, meaning at the place we were camped in; and as we have followed after them for fully fifteen miles they should be back long before this."

Just then the barking of a dog came to the ears of the talking officers.

It was surely a dog of one of the larger breeds that was making itself heard, for the bark was deep, and it had a sort of mournful ring to it.

An orderly came running up just then, and touching his hat, said:

"Lieutenant, there is a big black Newfoundland dog outside our lines. No one seems to know where he came from, and he absolutely refuses to make friends with any one. I thought I would report the matter to you, sir, as some of the men might take it in their heads to shoot him, and he seems to be too fine an animal to be shot for nothing."

"Bring the dog here and let us have a look at the brute," retorted the officer.

"I can't do that, sir. He will not follow me. He——"

"Here come our scouts!" interrupted the second lieutenant at that moment, and he waved his hat to three horsemen who had just come around a bend in the timber line a hundred yards away.

"It is time they were here," said Lefferts, in a snappy voice. "Come, surgeon, we will go and see this wonderful dog before the brute is shot."

The surgeon followed him to the east side of the camp where a number of the cavalymen were gathered around a fine specimen of a Newfoundland dog.

Though he showed no signs of biting, they kept at a safe distance.

First one and then another would pat their knee and try to make him come to them, but the dog would not make friends.

There appeared to be a yearning look in the big brown eyes of the dog, and at irregular intervals he would let out one of his deep-toned barks.

"Pooh!" said Lieutenant Lefferts, with a sneer. "A big black mongrel! I shall order him shot at once. We want no dogs around our camp to bark and let the enemy know where we are."

"That dog isn't a mongrel, lieutenant," mildly protested the surgeon. "It is a Newfoundland, and as fine a one as I ever saw. He is not much more than a puppy, either."

"What's the odds whether he's a Newfoundland or not!" snapped Lefferts. "He has got to be shot, and that's all there is to it. Get out of here, you big brute!" and he advanced toward the dog and made a kick at him.

At this the animal growled and showed his teeth, but did not move an inch.

At this juncture a dashing young horseman rode up and dismounted.

He quickly pushed his way through the crowd that had gathered around the dog that had refused to make friends with any one, and was just in time to see the lieutenant draw his revolver.

"What are you going to do, lieutenant?" he asked.

"Shoot that confounded cur! He refuses to allow any one to make friends with him and just showed his teeth to me."

Then something happened that was surprising to all.

The dog walked over to the newcomer, and wagging his tail in a pleased manner, licked his shapely hand.

Then a low murmur of applause went up from the cavalymen.

They were surprised, and glad, as well, to see that there was some one the dog would make friends with.

"I'll take the dog, lieutenant," said the young scout, as he bent over the animal and allowed his long, chestnut locks to touch him, while he took the proffered paw and shook it as though he was clasping the hand of a friend he was very glad to see. "It is only a dog that wants a master. I'll be his master, since he has picked me out."

"Step aside, Young Wild West. I am going to shoot the dog!"

Lefferts had drawn his heavy Colt's revolver and was even now trying to aim it at the animal's head.

The young scout who had been addressed as Young Wild West was erect in an instant.

He quickly stepped over so as to shield the dog, and then in a ringing voice exclaimed:

"You are not going to shoot that dog, lieutenant."

"What!" roared the officer, flying into a passion. "Do you, a common scout, dare to talk to me like that?"

"I am no common scout, lieutenant. I am your equal in every respect. You must remember that my services were sought after by your superiors, and that I agreed to accompany you on the condition that I was to be my own boss. I say you are not going to shoot the dog!"

"And I say I am! Stand back, Young Wild West, or you may get the bullet that is intended for the brute!"

Up went the revolver again until the muzzle seemed to be on a line with the Newfoundland's nose.

And Young Wild West had his hand on the dog's head.

The lieutenant surely meant business, for he did not flinch.

Just as he was going to pull the trigger the right fist of the young scout shot out and sent the weapon flying from his grasp.

At the same moment the dog uttered a growl and leaped for the throat of the man.

"Lie down!" commanded Young Wild West, and the dog obeyed.

"Now, then, lieutenant," he said, speaking as calmly as though it was only a little fun that was taking place, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" shrieked Lefferts. "I am going to shoot the dog, and you, too, Young Wild West!"

The lieutenant had certainly lost all control of himself, for with a quick move he seized a revolver from the belt of one of the cavalymen and was in the act of leveling it at Young Wild West when the clenched fist of the young scout again shot out.

This time it caught the officer full in the face, and he went down as though hit by a battering ram.

"Lieutenant," the champion of the Newfoundland said to the second lieutenant, "I wish you would call the captain."

"The captain is dead, sir," was the reply. "Lieutenant Lefferts is now in command."

"Oh!" and Young Wild West looked surprised. "Well, I shall refuse to obey any further orders from this command, then; neither will I report, unless an apology is made for the insult given me just now."

The boy—for he was nothing more, as far as age went—turned and walked away as he said this, the big dog following him as though he belonged to him.

But Lefferts was not through yet, by any means.

The blow had dazed him considerably, but he managed to get upon his feet just as the young scout was walking off.

"Seize that man and put him under guard!" he thundered, pointing to the boy.

Young Wild West folded his arms and looked him squarely in the eye, while the dog gave an ominous growl.

Not one of the men made a move to carry out the command of the officer.

For the space of several seconds a deathly silence reigned.

Then it was broken by Young Wild West.

"Lefferts," said he, dropping all the courtesies, "I am, as I said before, on an equal footing with you, in any respect. I am not bound to serve the United States Government, as you are; I am acting in the capacity of a scout of my own free will, and with the understanding that I am to come and go when I please—to obey the orders of no man, unless I think it wise to do so. You have ordered me to be placed under arrest! Now let me see your order carried out!"

Bow-wow! and the dog jumped up and placed his paws against the speaker's shoulders, as though he understood what was said, and wanted to show his appreciation of the ringing words.

At this Lefferts drew his sword and sprang upon the scout as though he meant to finish him then and there.

"Hold on, you measley coyote!" cried a stern voice, and a hand gripped his arm and caused him to drop the sword. "If you don't quit your crazy actions I'll break the butt of my revolver on ther top of your head!"

It was Cheyenne Charlie, one of the companion scouts of Young Wild West, and as his tall form loomed up before the angry lieutenant there came a faint murmur of applause from the men.

"Ogden," said Young Wild West, turning to the second lieutenant, "I advise you to take command. It is plain that Lefferts has either gone crazy, or that he is entirely incapable."

"There was a cheer at this, showing only too well that the privates had no liking for Lefferts."

"Go ahead and take command, Ogden," exclaimed the discomfited officer. "I am done. I will wait till I get back to Fort Casper; then my turn will come."

"You are afraid to go back to Fort Casper, after what has happened," declared Cheyenne Charlie. "Don't you suppose our word is as good as yours, you blamed coyote? You go back there, and your stripes will be taken from you, and you'll land in the guard-house."

"We'll see about that! Anyway, I'm done!"

The man, whose face was now red with passion, picked up his revolver and walked away.

Five minutes later he mounted his horse and was riding away over the trail in the direction they had been fleeing from the enemy.

A sigh of relief went up from the surgeon as he saw this.

"He was not a fit person to take command, anyway," he said to Young Wild West. "It seems to me that the captain was shot in a queer manner, anyway. He was shot in the back while facing the enemy."

There was a lot of significance in the remark, but the young scout never said a word just then.

But he had an opinion, just the same.

With the dog following him, he walked over to where his horse stood.

It was the faithful stallion, Spitfire, the beast that had carried him safely through many a tight place.

The sorrel was covered with foam, showing that he had been traveling at a fast gait, and when the dog came up he dropped his head till the noses of the two met.

That seemed to make them acquainted, for the horse allowed his ears to come to their normal position instantly, and the Newfoundland wagged his tail.

"That's right," said Young Wild West. "You might as well be friends. Spitfire, old boy, this is a dog that wanted a master, and I guess I fill the bill, so he is my dog, and we are going to travel together, for awhile, anyhow."

The other two scouts, who had come out with the cavalry with the same understanding as Young Wild West had, now stepped over to him.

Jim Dart, who was a young fellow about Wild's age, put out his hand.

"Shake, old chum," he said. "I hope you will stick to

that dog as long as he lives. He was looking for a master, and since you have taken him, I hope he will prove a mascot for you."

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG WILD WEST RUNS INTO DANGER.

The second lieutenant was now forced to take command of the cavalry.

He called them all in line, and told them that he was going to do his best by them, and that he expected them to do the same by him.

In concluding he said:

"I can't understand what made Lieutenant Lefferts act in the way he did, but you may rest assured that he can do nothing that will hurt any of us if he does go back to the fort and give in a report. You all know that he did very wrong in acting as he did, and you also know that I took no part in it whatever. When he deserted the camp, I, of course, had to take charge. That is all there is to it, boys, and until we receive orders to the contrary, we will push on to the Great South Pass."

A cheer went up from the men, showing that they were pleased with their new acting captain, and then he turned and walked over to where Young Wild West was talking to his two friends who had been out on the trail with him.

"You may report now, if you wish, Mr. West," he said.

"Well, sir, I will be pleased to do so," was the reply.

"We rode straight for the Great South Pass and reached it without meeting with a white or red. As we rode on through it this morning we met a provision train heading for Fort Casper. As there were not many men in charge of it, we came through with them and escaped being attacked. The train is coming down the trail within a mile or two of here, I have no doubt, if they have not halted. We thought we had better ride along ahead and get here to make our report. We saw no signs of the cavalry from Fort Bridger that we are to meet."

"Ah, now I am satisfied that the band that attacked us at daylight this morning is the one we are searching for. I am certain I saw Blackpowder Dan among them."

"If that is the case, sir, it is no wonder we went through the pass unmolested."

"The attack the fiends made upon us was a savage and determined one, but after they succeeded in routing us they did not take the trouble to pursue us far."

"If it really was the notorious Blackpowder Dan it was evidently his intentions to simply cripple you all he could, as he no doubt has the idea that you are bound for the Great South Pass to hunt for Professor Rathbun—that is, of course, if he really has him confined somewhere in the mountains."

"Yes; I suppose he has a way of finding out things, as well as we have. Blackpowder Dan is said to be a very crafty fellow."

"Well, so I have heard. I should like to meet him," and Young Wild West acted very much as if he meant it.

"Well, what is your advice, Mr. West?"

"I would suggest that we move on to the vicinity of the pass as soon as possible. We can find a place to camp where we would be able to more than hold our own in case of an attack, and then await the coming of the troopers from Fort Bridger."

"Your advice is good; it shall be acted upon."

The dead had all been buried, and their graves marked, so there was really nothing to keep them in camp any longer.

Half an hour later the seventy survivors of the company of brave Boys in Blue were moving along the trail in the direction of the Great South Pass.

Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart rode at the head of the line, their neat-fitting hunting-suits and broad-brimmed sombreros showing them off to good advantage against the blue uniforms of the regulars.

The Newfoundland dog trotted alongside the sorrel horse in as contented a way as a dog could possibly show.

"Jim," said Wild to his boy chum, "I suppose I ought to name the dog, since I have adopted him for good. What do you think would be a good name for him?"

"Well, I will tell you," was the reply. "When he sprang to grab Lefferts by the throat he put me more in mind of a lion than anything else. Why not call him Lion?"

"Good! Lion it shall be. Here, Lion, old fellow!" and he snapped his fingers at the dog. The animal responded by a joyous bark as he did so.

That settled it. Lion was the dog's name.

"Just what sort of a mascot he will prove to be I must learn later on," Young Wild West resumed. "I will first find out just how much he knows and how well he will mind. It seems rather odd that he took to me so readily, after having refused to make friends with so many. One thing, if he had not taken to me, I should not have allowed Lefferts to shoot him. Lefferts proved to be just what I took him to be when I met him the other day—a man of violent temper and of very little principle."

"And the surgeon intimated as much as that——"

"He shot the captain," Wild said, taking the words from Dart's mouth.

"It seems hardly possible that he would be guilty of such a dastardly act."

"Well, if the truth was known, the surgeon could tell more than he did. I have an idea that he knows for a fact that Lefferts shot the captain."

"It looks that way, or he would not have said as much as he did."

"Well, we will be liable to find out more about it when we get back to the fort. There is bound to be an investigation of what has occurred, you know."

"Oh, yes; that is a sure thing."

When they had covered a mile, they suddenly came upon the wagon train of supplies for the fort Young Wild West had spoken of in his report.

Those in charge of the outfit had considered it advisable to halt for an hour and feed the tired animals and themselves.

There were but seventeen men, all told, and one of these was an old guide in the employ of the army who had seen lots of experience in his day.

* That morning was the first he had ever met Young Wild West, but he had often heard of him.

He had formed a strong liking for "the boy with ther grit, strength an' tact of a man," as he called him, and he jumped to his feet and waved his hat when he saw him riding along at the head of the cavalry.

Lieutenant Ogden at once called a halt.

Then he started to hold a conversation with the officer in charge of the train.

And while they were talking, Jake Stein, the old guide, called Young Wild West aside.

"What do you think about it, my boy?" he questioned. "Do yer think we will be able to git to ther fort all right? I jest heard ther lieutenant say that Blackpowder Dan's gang of reds an' whites pitched into 'em this mornin'. If that's ther case, ther sneakin' coyotes must be somewhere hereabouts. It wouldn't do for 'em to jump on us, an' it are dollars to doughnuts that they'd be right glad to do it, 'cause we've got a whole lot of supplies here that would come in mighty handy for 'em."

"By Jove! I believe you are right, Mr. Stein!" exclaimed the dashing young fellow. "I never gave that a thought when I made my report to the officer in charge. I think we had better turn and go back to the fort with you, especially as we were sent out to hunt up Blackpowder Dan, and it is almost a known fact that he is not a great ways from us. I'll suggest it to the lieutenant as soon as he is through talking over there."

"I think it would be proper, my boy. I don't care for myself, but I happen to know that they are in need of ther stuff we've got over at Fort Casper."

"What do you think of my dog?" Wild resumed, noticing that the lieutenant and the man in charge of the men escorting the wagons were still in a very earnest conversation.

"I didn't know you had a dog. But say, that is a fine fellow, ain't it? Where did you get him?"

"Oh, I found him back here a ways. He appeared to be looking for a master, and as I seemed to just suit him, he adopted me, or I adopted him, just as you are a mind to put it."

"Well, if you want a dog, I don't think you could have done any better if you had searched ther whole country over, especially if you wanted a big dog. An he's only a pup, too, an' as good-natured as a pet lamb. Young Wild West, that's an intelligent critter, that is, an' now's yer time to learn him tricks an' sich. What's his name?"

"Lion."

"Well, that's a mighty good name, I should say. His head is shaped like them lions that belong in Afrikay what I've seen pictures of, an' if you was to cut all his hair off but

his mane he would be a lion for fair. Come here, old fellow, and shake hands with me."

The Newfoundland wagged his tail slightly, and then looked at his young master.

"Go ahead and shake hands with him, Lion," Wild said, as though the look had been a question from the animal as to whether he should shake hands or not.

And then, much to the surprise of all hands, Lion walked over and held up his paw to the old man.

"That's ther ticket! That's what I call a polite dog!" and Stein shook with him, after which he gave him a pat on his head.

The Newfoundland then walked back and sat down beside Wild, opening his big jaws and panting in the usual canine fashion.

"Wild has got a mascot now," Jim remarked.

"A mascot?" queried Stein. "What in blazes do you call that?"

"A mascot is one who, or that, is supposed to bring good luck."

"Oh, that is what a mascot is, hey? Well, I hope ther dog will bring Young Wild West good luck, for I guess ther boy is deservin' of it, from all accounts."

"Well, I have been very lucky, so far," Wild answered. "I was lucky enough to strike it rich in the hills over a year ago, and I have been very lucky in everything I undertook ever since. Only once did a small streak of bad luck get the best of me, and that was when I lost a hundred thousand dollars in gold in the twinkling of an eye. That happened so quickly that I had no chance to change the luck from bad to good, and all the mascots in creation would not have been sufficient to do it. But that streak of bad luck taught me a lesson that I will never forget."

"I should think it would! Lost a hundred thousand, hey? Well, I reckon I'll never lose that much, 'cause I'll never have it to lose," and the guide chuckled as though he had got off a good joke.

Lieutenant Ogden now came over to Wild.

"I hear, Mr. West," said he, "that the stores this train is taking over to the fort are much needed there. What do you think about it?"

"Well, I have just been talking to Mr. Stein here, and we have agreed that it would be a good idea that the train should be escorted in with your cavalrymen."

"That is just what I think about it. I don't know as I would be censured by the commander of the fort by acting on that line. Besides, it strikes me that I ought to go there and make a report of what has occurred, anyway."

"Yes, I think so. The cavalry from Fort Bridger will wait for us, as it was their orders to meet us near the mouth of the pass on this side. I guess they will be able to hold their own, in case of an attack from the band we are hunting for. We will go back to the fort with the train, Mr. Ogden, if you have no objections."

"So be it, then."

When the men belonging to the train had finished their

noonday meal, and the horses had been fed and watered the whole party set out along the trail for Fort Casper.

They had a hundred miles ahead of them, but they hoped to make it in two days by traveling part of the night.

Where the trail was level and hard the teams went along at a smart jog, but when the traveling became difficult, which was the case very often, they were forced to proceed at a walk.

It was just about dusk that the keen eyes of Young Wild West, who was riding in advance of the train, caught sight of an Indian galloping away in the distance.

Calling out for Charlie and Jim to take care of his mascot, for the dog could not possibly run as fast as the speedy sorrel, he started to catch the redskin and learn what his mission was in that vicinity.

Young Wild West gained rapidly upon the Indian, and when he was within two hundred yards of him he raised his rifle to his shoulder and sent a bullet whistling over his head.

This meant for the redskin to come to a halt.

But no attention was paid to it.

It was now quite dark, but Wild could see the moving horseman, for all that.

He was riding along the bank of the river, and trying hard to reach the timber which was not over a mile distant.

"He is certainly a hostile Indian," thought the young Prince of the Saddle, and it is my duty to drop him for not stopping when I fired the shot. But I can't do that. I can't shoot a man in the back unless he fires at me first."

But this the Indian had no intention of doing, it seemed.

Our hero figured that he would just about overtake him when he reached the edge of the timber, and as he felt quite sure that the fellow must have friends waiting for him there, he did not care to get too close to it.

He concluded to go a little nearer, though, and he urged his horse to a faster gait.

When he was within a quarter of a mile of the timber a savage yell broke from the woods, and the next instant a horde of Indians came galloping from the cover of the trees to meet him.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOINGS OF A TRAITOR.

When Lieutenant Lefferts took his departure from the camp he was certainly in a very angry mood.

Having been born with an evil disposition, it was wonderful how the man had lived to get as high as he was in the army.

Lefferts had been guilty of many evil deeds in his life, but he was one of the sort who, as crafty as they are, surely come to a bad end.

As the surgeon of the company had intimated, he had killed the captain while the fight was raging between them and the band of Indians and renegades.

He had shot the officer, who was as brave a man as could

be found in the service, in the back, and the surgeon had seen him commit the crime.

But there are times when a person will not give another away when he commits a crime.

The surgeon owed the lieutenant a poker debt that was really a larger sum than he would be able to pay for a long time, and it was that fact that kept him from informing on the villain at the time the dastardly act was committed.

And there was another who, though he had not exactly seen the crime committed, had witnessed enough immediately after it happened to convince him that Lefferts had done it.

This one was Lieutenant Ogden, but as he had no proof he did not say anything of it.

But it was his intention to fling it at his superior at every opportunity, hoping thus to make him angry and give himself away.

And Lefferts was suspicious that some one had seen him shoot the captain, too.

That was one reason why he got into such an ugly mood all of a sudden and acted the way he did about the dog that strayed to the camp.

The lieutenant had two reasons for wanting the captain out of the way.

The first, as one would naturally suppose, was that in case of his being killed in battle, he would be likely to succeed him as captain of the company.

But the second was a still deeper reason.

They were both in love with the same girl.

And pretty Marie Daniels, the daughter of General Daniels, commander of the fort, was the maiden in the case.

But right here let it be said that, though the girl loved neither of them, she always treated them in a proper manner.

Both had offered her their hand in marriage, but she had turned them aside.

This naturally caused a feeling of jealousy to come between them, though the captain was not the one to think of foul means to gain his point.

Neither was aware that the other had proposed to the girl and been refused.

That made them each think that the other was the lucky one.

And all the time Marie Daniels was in love with a man who had not yet plucked up sufficient courage to propose to her.

He was no other than the bold and dashing lieutenant who was now in charge of the company of regulars that had met with such a disastrous defeat in the fight with the band of Blackpowder Dan.

George Ogden, the modest second lieutenant, was madly in love with the girl, and though he felt certain that she favored neither of his superior officers, he was afraid to propose to her on account of her being the daughter of the commander of the fort.

Lefferts being the most vicious and hot-headed of the three admirers of the girl, had been the one to show his

nature, and by so doing he had lost all hope of winning her hand.

But when he rode away from the camp—a deserter—he was thinking of a way to make the girl become his wife, whether she wanted to or not.

In a single instant he had decided upon a course of action, and he had now started to carry it out.

He would try and find Blackpowder Dan and join his band.

Then he would get the villainous crowd to make a raid on the fort, and in the raid he would carry off pretty Marie Daniels.

It was a daring scheme, but when one takes in consideration that Lefferts knew just how everything was situated at the fort, it was not so daring, after all.

If he could spike the half a dozen old field pieces that made up the armament of the fort, it would not be such a hard matter to surprise the place and put it to rout in short order, since there were few troops there at the time.

With these thoughts in his head, the rascally lieutenant rode on along the trail in the hope of meeting Blackpowder Dan, or some of his men.

And it seemed that luck was with him in this respect, for he had not ridden more than a couple of miles past the spot where the attack on the camp had been made when he suddenly came in sight of half a dozen Indians who were evidently scouting along the trail.

The instant they saw the lone cavalryman riding toward them they opened fire upon him.

But the distance was so great that their bullets flew wide of the mark.

Then he quickly pulled his handkerchief from his pocket, and fixing it to the end of his sword, held it over his head, still continuing to ride slowly toward them.

They ceased firing instantly, and being a brave fellow, despite the fact that he was a villain, he rode boldly up to them.

"Ugh!" grunted one of the redskins, when he came to a halt within fifty yards of them. "What does the soldier from the fort want with the red men?"

"I am no longer a soldier from the fort," answered Lefferts. "I have left my people to join the band of Blackpowder Dan. I dare not go back to my people, for if I do I will be shot!"

"Paleface tell heap much lie!" said the Indian.

"I am not telling a lie," declared Lefferts. "Take me to Blackpowder Dan, and if he finds that I am telling a lie he can kill me."

This seemed to satisfy the Indian scouts, so after holding a short consultation in their own tongue they told him to come on, and that they would take him to Blackpowder Dan.

The rascally officer was confident that he would have no trouble in getting into the good graces of the notorious half-breed leader, so he rode along with them, jubilant at the success he was having, and thinking of how he would soon have the girl in his clutches.

The Indians conducted him to a heavy growth of trees on

the bank of the Sweetwater River in the center of which the camp of the mixed band of lawless men was located.

Lefferts was conducted right through the lines, and though the frowns and dark looks he received were many, he paid no attention to them.

In a few minutes he was standing before the dreaded leader of the band that had been playing such havoc in that part of the country, and which was supposed to hold Professor Rathbun a prisoner somewhere in the hills near the Great South Pass.

Blackpowder Dan could speak as good English as the majority of the whites in that section, and when he had carefully sized up the villainous lieutenant, he said, in his usual gruff voice:

"Well, lieutenant, what do you want here?"

"I have come to join your band, if you will have me," was the quick retort.

"And if I won't have you—what then?"

"Oh, well——" and the man shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, what?"

"I suppose I will have to run the chances of being shot by your crowd, or by the troopers, or by Young Wild West, that's all."

"You mean, then, that you have deserted the army?"

"Yes."

"A foolish thing for a first lieutenant to do, it seems to me," and the half-breed looked quizzically at the uniform the man wore.

"You suppose I must have had a reason for deserting?"

"Yes; lemme hear your reason."

"I shot the captain of my company this morning while you were attacking us."

"You did?" and Blackpowder Dan became very much interested.

"Yes; I shot him!"

The lieutenant's eyes flashed in a manner which told that he was not sorry for doing it, either.

"What did you shoot him for?"

"Because he was after a girl I want for my wife," was the truthful reply.

"Ah!" and the half-breed became more interested than ever.

"I want to join your band so I can fix it so you can make a raid on the settlement at Fort Casper. You can get lots of booty to pay you for doing it, and all I want for my trouble is the girl. I will take her off to your stronghold in the hills and get a medicine man of the Sioux to marry us. Then I will stick to you and try to work myself up till maybe you will make me an officer under you. As I dare not go back to my own people again, it will be my mission to do them all the harm I can. Blackpowder, I have spoken, now what do you say?"

"You have a tongue that seems to talk straight," replied the half-breed. "Come to my tent and we will talk more about this."

Lefferts felt that he had won, and with a confident smile,

he followed the villainous leader into a tent that was located in the center of the camp.

And so he had won, for after an hour's conversation, Blackpowder led the way outside and passed the word for the officers under him, both whites and reds, to assemble.

In a few minutes they had gathered about the two, and then the leader of the band raised his hand for silence.

"Boys," said he, "I want to introduce you to Lieutenant Lefferts. He has left the army, and from this out he will be one of us. You will treat him right, for it is my orders. I want you to tell this to the men under you, so there will be no mistake made. This man will be allowed to come and go as he sees fit, ther same as ther rest of you."

Lefferts bowed right and left as though it was one of the proudest moments of his life.

It seems strange how quickly a man can fall sometimes.

The traitor had told all the secrets of the fort, and also that a wagon train loaded with supplies was due almost at any time.

Blackpowder Dan meant to attack this train, for he well knew he would find lots of things he and his men could make use of, especially in the line of provisions.

After the introduction Lefferts and the half-breed had another talk, the result being that the traitor mounted his horse and rode off in the direction of Fort Casper.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOG TO THE RESCUE.

Though Young Wild West suspected that the Indians had companions lurking in the woods, he was a little surprised to see them come out in such numbers.

He wheeled his horse with remarkable quickness, for he knew he could not cope successfully with so many.

The troopers and the wagon train were at least a mile off, so he could expect no immediate help from that quarter.

As the gallant sorrel started back with the speed of the wind the daring young scout turned in the saddle and raised his rifle to his shoulder.

There was a sharp crack, a flash of fire from the muzzle, and then the death yell of a Sioux brave sounded above the warwhoops and hoarse yells of the white renegades.

"There goes one!" muttered the boy.

Just then three shots rang out in quick succession from a direction that was at right angles to that which he was pursuing.

In the faint glimmer of the stars he saw half a dozen horsemen bearing down upon him from that direction.

Young Wild West was in a tight place.

The newcomers were bound to head him off; he could see that.

His only hope was to stay them off until Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and the cavalry got there.

He now began firing at the indistinct forms as fast as he could handle the rifle in his hands.

But it was difficult to get a bead on them, and when he

had fired half a dozen shots only two saddles had been emptied.

Nearer and nearer those who were heading him off came, and realizing that it was going to be a fight at close quarters, he swung his rifle over his shoulder and drew his revolvers.

When they got close enough he would certainly make them scatter.

Young Wild West was a whole dozen when it came to a fight at close quarters with revolvers.

With the bridle rein in his teeth, he rode on, fearless and ready to deal out the hot lead that he was keeping in store for them.

Two seconds later they were near enough for him to begin operations.

He fired just one shot, and then Spitfire pitched into a treacherous hole that was hidden by the prairie grass, and fell in a heap.

Young Wild West, being unprepared for anything of that kind, went flying over the animal's head and landed in a confused heap three or four yards away.

An exultant yell came from the foremost of the pursuers, and before the boy could get upon his feet two of them had dismounted and seized him.

He was too dazed from the sudden fall to make much resistance, and almost in the twinkling of an eye they disarmed him.

Meanwhile his gallant horse struggled to his feet and galloped from the spot before the fiends could catch him.

Young Wild West was quickly rendered helpless by a lariat being wound about his body which pinioned his arms to his sides, and then he was thrown on a steed before a Sioux warrior and carried swiftly toward the timber.

It was just at this time that the cavalymen opened fire on the Indians, but none of them were hit, and they only rode all the faster to get to the main band, which was now maneuvering to attack the wagon train, one of the Indian scouts having given the word as to where it was.

It was Blackpowder's band who had captured the young Prince of the Saddle.

The half-breed had nearly two hundred at his back, and about all of them were armed with modern rifles.

That made them foes not to be despised.

Young Wild West was quickly carried through the advancing lines and taken to the camp.

Then fully three-fourths of the band spread out into a semi-circle, and went for the cavalry and men belonging to the train.

It was a rather daring move on their part, and an unexpected one, too. After a hot exchange of shots for fifteen minutes Blackpowder got the main body of his men between the troopers and the wagons, and then he fell back and took them.

Then the villains had all the advantage, for the wagons helped shield them from the bullets of the brave band of whites.

After a sharp fight, during which the cavalry was re-

pulsed three times, they were forced to withdraw for the time being.

They were outnumbered two to one, and though they only lost two men, over half of them were wounded, brave Lieutenant Ogden being one of the number.

Both Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart received flesh wounds, too, but neither were forced to stop fighting.

It was on the advice of the former that the fight was given up for the present.

"We can't do anything against 'em in ther dark," he said. "Wait till daylight an' then we kin pick 'em off."

Ogden was not willing to do this, but he saw the wisdom of it, and soon gave in.

Meanwhile the band of victorious villains were having great fun at raiding the wagons.

They took absolutely everything of value from them and then set fire to them.

While the flames were leaping skyward they rode off for their camp in the timber.

When they reached it Blackpowder was jubilant.

He had not received a scratch, though he had been in the thickest of the fray, and had kept his men fighting when they were on the verge of retreating more than once.

The victory was all due to him, and when his lieutenants thought it over after the fight they made up their minds that they had the greatest leader that had ever been known in the great West.

A double line of sentries was placed around the camp, so there could be no possible chance of surprise, and then Blackpowder stalked over to the tree to which Young Wild West had been bound when he had been brought a prisoner to the camp.

This was the first meeting between the two, though they knew each other from the description they had received.

"So this is the great Young Wild West, is it?" said the half-breed, with a sneer.

"And you are the notorious half-breed leader, Blackpowder Dan, I presume," was the cool retort. "I am sorry that we meet on such uneven terms."

Blackpowder Dan laughed as though he regarded the latter remark a good joke.

"What could a boy like you do if we met on even terms?" he asked. "I have heard that you are a dead-shot, but what would that amount to with me? I, too, am a dead-shot, and I can also handle a bowie knife as no living man can."

"You are what the Indians call 'a heap much brag,'" retorted Young Wild West. "It is very nice for you to talk like that when there is no one to face you on even terms with a revolver or knife. I would be only too glad to meet you with either."

"Would you?" was the sneering rejoinder. "Well, it may be that I will give you a chance before I turn you over to the Sioux, who hate you so. Young Wild West, I am very glad to meet you, for they told me that when you once got on my trail you would surely make it hot for me."

"And so I will."

Again the half-breed laughed.

"When?" he asked.

"Oh, the time will surely come."

"It does not look much like it now," and with that the villain walked from the spot.

After that it seemed that every Indian and white scoundrel in the camp took a turn at jeering and taunting the boy captive.

But he paid not the least attention to them, and after awhile they grew tired and let him alone.

Young Wild West had often been in fixes of that kind and experience told him it was best to remain quiet on such occasions.

True to his nature, his pluck and coolness did not desert him.

He knew that the cavalry had been defeated in the fight and that the wagons had been raided, but that did not keep him from thinking that he was going to manage to escape somehow.

Wild had been bound with a lariat of buckskin, and he was glad of it, for by making an occasional effort, he could stretch it.

As the night wore on, and he was left to his own reflections, save for the stoical brave who had been designated to watch him, and kept walking back and forth in front of the tree to which he was bound, the boy contrived to work his hands free.

But his arms were still bound to his sides, and the lariat that held him to the tree had many turns about it.

"If I only had a knife I would cut myself loose and run for it," he thought.

While he was meditating thus he felt something cold and moist touch his hands.

Young Wild West gave a start.

Just what it was he could not imagine, but a moment later, when he heard just the least bit of a whine, it came to him like a flash.

The dog he had taken under his care had come to him.

Instantly he thrust his right hand as far as he could behind him, and it came in contact with the Newfoundland's head.

"The dog has certainly been trained," muttered Wild, as he patted him on the head. "If he had not been he would have come bounding to me, regardless of how many were about. He has been owned by some fellow well versed in woodcraft, I am certain. Well, now that Lion, my mascot, has come to me, I guess I will get away from here. I wonder if Lion knows how to chew a knot loose? I guess— Hello!"

No wonder the boy breathed the sudden exclamation.

Around the dog's neck was a strap, and to the strap were tied a revolver and a knife!

With his eyes fixed on the Indian who was walking slowly up and down, Young Wild West gradually changed the weapons to his own hands.

The revolver he soon slid into his hip pocket, and getting the knife in his right hand, he began cutting the lariat that bound him.

Not a sound came from the dog while all this was taking place, and never once did he show himself, so even his master could see him.

Young Wild West was going to attempt to do a most daring thing.

To get out of that camp alive seemed an utter impossibility.

If he were to dart away and attempt to escape through the lines he would stand no show, since there were plenty of the warriors who were as fleet as he.

And then, again, they would most likely fire a volley at him before he got away.

No! Young Wild West did not intend to make his escape in that way.

He was going to try and get away from the camp without the knowledge of Blackpowder Dan and his men.

When they found he was not there it would be too late to stop him.

There was not a person living who could beat Young Wild West in the art of woodcraft.

If he could not get past the sentries and reach the prairie, no one could.

But the big Newfoundland dog! Would he not be apt to attract the attention of the Indians guarding the camp, and thus bring them upon the boy to frustrate his daring attempt to escape?

One would naturally suppose so.

But Wild did not.

The dog had reached him without being seen by the guards, and if he could come there through their lines, he could go back in the same way.

That is the way our hero figured.

That Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were not a great distance from the camp, Wild was sure.

It must have been they who tied the knife and revolver to the strap, and then fastened it about the dog's neck.

There was only one obstacle between the boy and liberty now.

That was the way he looked at it, anyway.

And that one obstacle was the Indian brave who had been appointed to watch him during the long hours of the night.

That red man must die in order for the white boy to regain his liberty.

It had to be done, and when Young Wild West succeeded in cutting the thongs so that a single step would cause them to drop to the ground, he nerved himself for the unpleasant duty that confronted him.

The Indian was now walking toward him and would pass inside of two seconds.

As he got in front of him he stopped and looked keenly at the prisoner.

At first Wild thought he had noticed that the lariat was loose.

But he saw that this was not the case, for he turned and went over to a tree a few feet distant, and after looking around carefully, sat down.

He was tired, and was going to run the risk of taking a rest for awhile.

"Ah!" muttered Wild. "He has saved his life by doing that, though he is not aware of it. I will get away without having to kill him, now, for he is sleepy and will not notice me in a minute."

Sure enough, this was the case.

The Indian must have been pretty well tired out, for he had scarcely settled into a comfortable position when he began to nod.

It was quite dark there, and without any hesitation, Young Wild West allowed the severed lariat to fall to the ground, and the next moment he was moving away from the tree, his hand clutching the strap around the dog's neck.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTURE OF THE MAIDEN.

It was a daring scheme that Lefferts had concocted.

When he set out for the fort he intended to arrange things so Blackpowder Dan would have an easy thing of it.

But let us follow him and see just what he did.

It was a long ride ahead of him, and he did not spare his horse that night.

When morning dawned he took a rest of an hour, during which he gave his steed a good rubbing, so his joints would not stiffen before he reached the end of his journey.

Then he started off again, gradually increasing his speed.

He was following the course of the river, for the trail ran parallel with the bank, and when noon came he halted long enough to shoot a young buck, from which he cut a haunch and proceeded to cook himself a meal.

He rested about two hours, and then when he was ready to resume his journey, he smeared the blood of the buck on his uniform and hands to make it appear as if he had been in a dreadful encounter.

He had less than fifteen miles to go to reach the fort, and with a grim smile of determination, he mounted and rode off.

Nearer and nearer he came to the fort, and presently he could see the stockade in the distance with its old-fashioned log fort, and the few low buildings around it which made up the settlement.

The flag he had deserted was flying from a pole near the fort, and as he looked at the glorious stars and stripes the traitor shrugged his shoulders, as though he was thinking for the first time of what he had done.

But he soon threw off the feeling, and a few minutes later he rode up to the gate of the stockade and was admitted by the sentry, who saluted him in accordance with the rank he held in the army.

"I must see the general at once," said Lefferts, as he dismounted, affecting great weariness as he did so, in front of the modest residence of the commander of the fort.

He was conducted to the presence of General Daniel without loss of time.

"What is the matter, lieutenant?" asked that official in

surprise. "Are you wounded? What has happened that you come back alone, covered with blood and in an exhausted condition?"

"I am covered with blood and glory, general," lied the scoundrel. "I am not wounded anything to speak of, though. We were attacked yesterday morning by Blackpowder's gang, and we were badly beaten. Over half our men were slain and scalped. The captain was one of the first to fall, and I was taken a prisoner. I managed to escape by killing three of the redskins who were guarding me last night, and here I am. The band, which numbers over two hundred, is camped off to the left about forty miles in a grove of cottonwoods. They are in a sorry plight, too, as many of them are wounded. Now is the time to put the finishing touch to them."

All this string of lies the general drank in eagerly.

While it goaded him to think that so many men had been lost, he was anxious to get at the mixed band that was such a terror to that part of the country.

Lefferts was given a drink of brandy, and when he had indulged in a good wash he told the general a story in detail that would throw him entirely off the scent and send the detachment he proposed to send out immediately on a fool's errand thirty miles away from Blackpowder Dan's band.

The result was that half an hour later thirty men were dispatched to find the half-breed, with orders to kill or capture them all, and then hunt up the cavalymen who had been so badly routed.

Besides the thirty regulars and officers, there were less than a dozen men now at the fort.

The traitor felt jubilant, for when darkness set in the allied forces of the half-breed would be there to make the attack, and then while the fight was raging he would carry off the general's daughter.

Just before sunset Lefferts contrived to get into the log fortress and spike the few guns there were there.

This done, he set about to find a means of getting pretty Marie Daniels away.

The river bank was close at hand, and as he walked down to it his eye caught sight of the boat the girl was wont to go rowing in when the weather was fine.

It was a finely built little craft on the skiff pattern, and was capable of carrying five or six with perfect safety.

"That is it!" he exclaimed under his breath. "Now, if Blackpowder Dan does not forget to send the men straight to the general's house the minute they get there, as he said he surely would, it will be easy enough. He will take the girl to the boat, and then row up the river with her. When the band is returning, after a victorious raid, they will come up with us, and then we will abandon the boat and take to the horses. It is a great scheme, as no one here will think of such a thing as the girl being taken away with the boat. When they find out she is gone they will think she was captured and carried away on horseback. And as there won't be many men left to follow and try to rescue her, I guess there will not be a particle of trouble in doing the thing without a hitch in it."

The sun had just gone down below the line of the western horizon when Lefferts paused at the gate of the general's residence.

He had noticed the girlish form seated on the stoop from the distance, and he could not resist the temptation to have a few words with pretty Marie.

"Good-evening," he said, tipping his hat politely. "I have had a hard time of it, Miss Daniels. At one time I thought I would never set eyes on the old fort again."

"Yes," answered the girl, a trifle wearily, it seemed, for she really detested the man, and did not even care to hold conversation with him.

But he was resolved to talk to her now, for it had struck him that it would not be more than half an hour before the attack would be made, provided the half-breed kept his word, and nothing happened to prevent him.

"It would be a fine evening for a row on the river," Lefferts suggested.

"I was thinking that," she replied.

"Won't you allow me to take you out for half an hour?"

"No; I think I will go alone. I can handle a boat as well as a man, Lieutenant Lefferts. Did I understand that you reported to my father that Captain Alden was killed in the fight?"

"Yes; the poor fellow went under almost at the start."

"And the second lieutenant—how about him?"

The question was asked in a tremulous voice, and the traitor gave a start.

"What can she be interested in Ogden for?" he thought.

"Well, I will tell her he got killed, too."

Then aloud he said:

"Lieutenant Ogden is among the killed, too. I saw the poor fellow get his billet just before I was knocked from my horse and made a prisoner. He was literally riddled with bullets."

A suppressed cry of agony came from the lips of the girl when she heard this, and then the brow of the villain darkened.

"So she is in love with Ogden, is she?" he muttered. "Well, this is news to me. Ha, ha! the little minx. She shall become my bride, though, no matter who she is in love with. I have lost everything to gain her, and I will not be thwarted now!"

The girl got up and went into the house without another word.

Five minutes later Lefferts saw her go out by the back way and make for the river.

She was bereheaded and had a light wrap thrown over her shoulder, and in the gathering twilight she looked more beautiful than ever to him.

Straight for the bank she went, and he peered through the trees and saw her go to the place where the boat was moored.

Then he lighted a cigar, and began pacing back and forth, waiting for the expected attack to begin.

But he took pains to walk where he could keep an eye on the river bank.

If the girl did not return to the house before the attack was made, it would be so much easier to accomplish his foul purpose.

Half an hour passed, and it was now thoroughly dark.

There was no moon, either, and that would give the villainous band an excellent opportunity to reach the stockade without being seen.

Lefferts now began to grow nervous.

"It is time they were here," he thought. "I hope they have not come in contact with the detachment, for if they have the cake will be all dough, and I will have to make myself scarce, for there is no telling but that Young Wild West and his gang might take it in their heads to ride over here. I wonder if Blackpowder Dan got the supply wagons? I wonder if——"

At that instant a blood-curdling yell sounded on the still evening air, and all was in confusion.

The attack had been made.

The gate of the stockade was torn down in short order, it being a rather dilapidated contrivance, anyhow, and in swarmed the Indians and their white allies.

It had been years since the fort had been attacked, and this made such a thing more surprising to the men.

Like so many demons, the allied forces swept upon the little cluster of houses, ignoring the frowning muzzles of the guns entirely.

Blackpowder Dan must certainly have placed a lot of faith in the word of Lefferts, or he would never have dared to charge right up to the fort.

Those of the men who did not fall at the first onslaught hastened to get the women and children inside the fortress of logs.

Meanwhile Lefferts dropped in the shadow of a big rose bush in front of the general's house.

The attacking party made quick work of it.

They drove the men inside the fort, where they poured a hot fire from the loop holes.

Lefferts smiled in a fiendish manner as he thought of their feelings when they found the cannons had been spiked.

A minute or two later there came a rush toward the general's house.

The traitor now walked out.

Two of the villains coming were whites and the rest Indians.

The latter carried burning brands in their hands and meant to set the houses on fire.

Lefferts quickly called the white men, who immediately ran up to him.

"Tell us what to do, cap," said one of them. "We ain't got much time, though I guess we killed putty nigh half of 'em."

"Come with me," answered the traitor. "The girl went out on the river in a boat. Come."

Off the trio went for the bank, Lefferts in the lead.

The shooting was still fast and furious, which told him that the brave defenders were putting up a stiff fight.

But he cared not how many were killed on either side.

All he wanted was to get the girl.

It so happened that Marie Daniels had been some distance up the river when the Indian warwhoop and the firing came to her ears.

Badly frightened, because she could scarcely realize what it meant, she turned the boat and started back.

And she got to the landing just in time to meet Lefferts and the two men.

"Don't get out of the boat, my pretty one!" exclaimed the traitor, springing in beside her and forcing her back upon the seat in the stern. "The fort has been attacked by a thousand Indians, and we must get to a place of safety."

The frightened girl looked at him as though she did not know whether to believe him or not.

But she could not avoid uttering a shrill scream just then.

"Shut up!" hissed Lefferts. "Do you want to have them all after us? Push her off, boys. That's it! Now, which of you can row?"

"I kin," and one of the villains picked up the oars, and a minute later the boat was gliding swiftly up the river.

The poor girl had fainted, so there was no danger of her screams attracting any one to the rescue just then.

The boat had not gone far up the stream when a fresh burst of firing was heard from the direction of the fort.

Then there came yells that told them plainly that the Indians had been subjected to a sudden surprise.

"Help must have come to them at the fort," said one of the men, significantly.

"Young Wild West an' his gang, most likely," remarked the other.

"If that is the case it is too bad," said Lefferts. "I had things fixed just as I told Blackpowder I would, and there was no trouble for him to make a clean sweep of it. If the men of my company and Young Wild West have got here, I am sorry, but I can't help it."

"No; of course you can't," retorted the first speaker. "Well, I reckon we are about as well off in this boat as anywhere else around here just now. Cap, ther gal is comin' to. You had better fix her up so she can't holler."

Marie Daniels had recovered, and she was just going to utter a scream for help when Lefferts placed his hand over her mouth.

"Be quiet, my pretty one," he whispered. "I am taking you away to the mountains, where you will become my bride and live like the queen that you are. Ah, well, I will have to bind and gag you, then," and with the aid of the man who was not handling the oars, he soon did so.

Whatever had happened to Blackpowder Dan, Lefferts had accomplished his purpose, anyway.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOG PROVES HIS WORTH.

Young Wild West soon found that he could place the utmost confidence in his mascot.

The dog seemed to understand the situation thoroughly. Like shadows the two flitted through the trees and underbrush, not making a sound that could be heard ten feet.

Once the boy looked back, and finding that the Indian sentinel was still sitting down with his chin on his breast, he gained courage enough to move a little faster.

The next minute he released his hold upon the strap around the Newfoundland's neck.

Wild felt that it would be a good idea to let the intelligent animal lead him from the camp.

On either side he could hear the footfalls of the slowly moving sentinels, and he knew that the least sound out of the ordinary would bring them to the spot.

The dog had his nose to the ground now, and on his hands and knees Young Wild West crept after him.

Once the dog got a few feet ahead of him among the bushes, and when Wild stopped moving, undecided as to which way to proceed, he came back with a tread that was soft as that of a cat and touched his master on the forehead with his nose, as much as to say: "Come right on; I will get you out of this all right; trust to me."

After that the boy kept right along with him.

"You are my mascot; so go on; I'll follow you," he thought.

About fifty yards from the tree he had escaped from there was an open space that Wild could see plainly as he neared it.

He thought that Lion would go around it, and thus keep under the cover of the bushes, but the dog did not do that.

He had evidently come that way, and he was going back the same way.

With head and tail erect, the Newfoundland stepped into the open place and started to cross it.

His master was just going to follow him when a guttural "Ugh!" sounded within a few feet of him.

Then a low growl escaped the dog.

Wild grasped the hunting knife he held in his hand in a tight grip.

He felt that there was going to be trouble.

The next instant an Indian warrior moved toward the dog, probably bent on seeing what it was.

"Whur-r-r-r!" growled the dog.

The redskin carried a heavy musket, and as he heard the growl he swung it over his head to dash the animal's brains out.

But he was not quick enough.

The Newfoundland leaped high in the air and struck the redskin's shoulders with his paws, sending him over backward and causing him to drop the gun.

Then Young Wild West made as quick a move as his mascot had.

He sprang forward like a shot, and gripping the gun by the barrel, dealt the Indian a heavy blow on the head with it.

Lion wagged his tail and at once left the sentry where he had fallen, and started across the open spot at the same slow gait he had been traveling.

Wild knew if he had not killed the Indian he had certainly rendered him unconscious, so keeping the musket in his hand, he started after the dog, expecting every second to hear the sounds of footsteps from some of the red fiends who had heard the noise of the short struggle.

But this did not happen, so he made up his mind that there had been none of them near enough to hear what transpired.

Fifteen seconds more, and the boy and the dog were at the edge of the timber.

They were now outside the line of the sentinels, but neither moved any faster from the knowledge of it.

Young Wild West made up his mind that he had found a treasure in the dog, and as he realized fully what the animal had done for him he thought more of him than ever.

Keeping low in the grass, so he could not be seen by any of those on guard, the boy crept along in the wake of the Newfoundland.

For two minutes he kept on, and then he arose to his feet.

"Now, Lion, we can hurry a little, I guess," he said, patting the dog on the head.

His mascot seemed to understand, for he wagged his tail, and as his master made a move to run he darted ahead of him and led the way.

In the distance Wild could see a group of trees not far from the bank of the river and pretty close to the trail.

Lion was heading that way, and he came to the conclusion that his friends were there in hiding.

And so it proved, for three minutes later, when he was within fifty yards of the trees a voice called out in a low tone:

"Hello, there!"

"It was Jim Dart, and the heart of Young Wild West gave a bound.

"Hello, Jim!" he answered. "I am here!"

"Good!"

"So ther dog found you, then?" spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, stepping into view. "That is what I call great. He wanted to get away so bad ever since you've been gone that me an' Jim come to ther conclusion to let him have his own way about it. We tried three or four times to work our way to ther camp of ther Injuns an' white rascals, but we found we couldn't do it."

"So we let Lion go, after tying a knife and revolver to the strap we had to put around his neck to keep him with us," added Jim.

"And he found me, and after I had cut myself from the tree I was tied to he led me from the camp in safety. Lion is a noble dog, aren't you, old fellow?"

The Newfoundland jumped up, showing his delight at being spoken to and licked his master's hand.

"I didn't think it was in him to do it," resumed Cheyenne Charlie, shaking his head as though he was still in doubt about it.

"Well, I made up my mind that there was a chance that he would get to you without being discovered, and if he

did you would certainly find the knife and revolver," said Jim. "The dog has succeeded in doing what neither of us could. He got in and out of the camp without being seen by the sentries."

"One of them saw him as we was leaving," Wild observed.

"He did?"

"Yes."

"And what happened?"

"Lion knocked him down and I hit him on the head with his own gun. Here it is. I brought it with me. It is one of the finest clubs I ever handled."

"I should say so," said Charlie, as he felt of the old-fashioned piece. "I wouldn't want to git a crack on my head with ther butt of it."

"Neither would I," and Jim shook his head.

"Where are the cavalymen?" our hero asked, as he looked around and found there were no signs of a camp there.

"Over here about a mile," and Charlie pointed to the north.

"Here is Spitfire," spoke up Jim. "We found him shortly after the Indians got you. We thought we would bring him along, as you might need him."

"Good! I think I do need him now. It will make me feel like my old self again to get on his back."

The three horses were tied behind a clump of bushes, and Jim led the way to them.

They were in the act of mounting when they heard an uproar break out in the camp of the allies under the lead of the half-breed, Blackpowder.

"My escape has been discovered," cried Wild. "Come on; let us get away from here."

Into the saddle they got, and then off they went at a canter for the camp of the cavalry.

Young Wild West kept in the rear and saw to it that they did not ride too fast for the dog.

Lion could put up a pretty fair gait for a dog of his breed.

And he seemed to be delighted to be able to run by the side of Spitfire.

"Let 'em come after us, if they want to," said Charlie. "They'll wish they hadn't when they git close to our camp, for we've got a place that we could hold ag'in twice as many as there are of 'em."

"That's right," corroborated Dart. "We struck a fine place after they got the best of us near the wagons. It was a great fight, and our side came off pretty lucky, as far as losses are concerned. A whole lot got wounded, though, and Charlie and I were in the lot. A bullet grazed my thigh, and Charlie got a slit in his arm from a redskin's knife."

"But ther surgeon soon fixed us up," added the scout.

The uproar in the camp in the timber behind them subsided almost as quickly as it began.

"They are not going to give immediate pursuit," said Wild. "They will send out scouts now to find out where our camp is."

He knew enough about the nature of a redskin to satisfy him on this point.

The ride to the camp was soon made, and Young Wild West was warmly welcomed by the cavalymen and the survivors who had been in charge of the wagon train.

But when they heard how the Newfoundland dog had been the means of effecting his escape from the camp of the allies they were astonished.

"Ther dog has got more sense than some men," spoke up Jake Stein, the old scout.

"He certainly has," said Lieutenant Ogden. "I can't tell you how pleased I am that Lefferts did not kill him."

"That dog is worth a dozen such fellows as Lefferts, dead or alive," declared the surgeon, as he patted the intelligent animal on the head. "Young Wild West, they say a dog friend is the truest friend a man can have. I begin to believe that it is true."

"So do I," replied our hero. "There is only one thing that puzzles me, and that is how the dog came to take to me so quickly. He must certainly have had a master before. But I hope whoever it is, he won't come to claim him."

"He has no other master but you now; that is conclusive."

The camping place the cavalry occupied certainly was a good one.

It was on the breast of a ridge that was thickly overgrown with stunted oaks and pines and backed by a high sandhill.

The ridge was not over a hundred yards long, and around it on all sides was nothing but the bare, open prairie.

The approach of an enemy could be seen from all points, and they had the trees and the sandhill to shield them from bullets.

The guards were doubled on the advice of Young Wild West, and some of the tired ones turned in to get some sleep.

Our hero was one of these, for he was pretty well tired out.

He had been through considerable that day.

He had been asleep about two hours when he was awakened by the report of a rifle.

He was on his feet instantly.

Then one of the guards came in with the report that Cheyenne Charlie had just shot an Indian scout.

"That is all right," said Wild. "They will not bother us any more to-night, then, see if they do."

He again turned in and slept till morning.

It had resulted as he said—they had seen no signs of any more redskins about the camp.

When daylight came, all hands were much relieved.

There is a vast difference in fighting Indians in the darkness and in the light.

In the daylight a marksman can see where to send his bullet, while in the night he has to guess where to fire more than half the time, as the red demons are so apt at moving in the grass.

The men had rations enough left for a good breakfast, and when this was eaten, Lieutenant Ogden asked Wild his advice about what they should do.

"Stay right here until Blackpowder Dan moves his men from the camp over there," was the reply.

"And what then?"

"If they move in the direction of the Great South Pass we will ride on to the fort; and if they go in some other direction, we must follow them and learn what they are up to."

"You are right; that is the best thing we can do."

"I think so, lieutenant."

"I know so, when I come to think of it."

Old Jake Stein, the guide, had taken it on himself to go out on a little scout of his own right after breakfast, and half an hour later he came riding back to the camp in a hurry.

"Blackpowder Dan is gittin' ready to move," he said. "If some one of you'll climb that big pine over there I reckon you kin see which way they'll go."

Jim Dart ran to the tree indicated before any one else could get there.

He was good at climbing, and he went up like a monkey.

In a very short time he had found a good place of observation near the top.

For five minutes he remained silent, and then he called out to those below:

The whole crowd of them have crossed the river, and are heading in the direction of Fort Casper."

"Well," said Young Wild West, "it can't be that they will continue very far in that direction, but as they are going that way, so will we."

"Mount, boys, and get ready to start!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

Five minutes later the column was in motion, with Young Wild West and Lieutenant Ogden riding ahead.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEARCH FOR THE GIRL BEGINS.

"By Jove! I believe the band of rascals is heading straight for Fort Casper!" exclaimed Young Wild West, when they had been following the allied forces for an hour, and found that they had not turned from the course they had taken, which was parallel with the river.

"They must have an idea that they are invincible, if they are going to attack the fort," remarked the lieutenant.

"They would never do that unless they knew just what they are doing," and the handsome young scout shook his head.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that they would never think of such a thing as attacking the fort without they knew just how the land lay—that it was a sure thing that they would have an easy time of it."

"And in that case there would have to be a traitor from the fort to give them all the necessary points."

"Yes."

"Well, I have an idea who the traitor is, then."

"Who?"

"Lefferts."

"But he has not had time to ride to the fort and back yet."

"That is true. But maybe he will ride on ahead and fix it so they will have no trouble in capturing the place."

"Well, there is wisdom in what you say, for, to tell the truth, I think Lefferts is capable of doing almost anything."

"I know so," said Ogden, vehemently.

"It is just a good easy twelve hours' ride to the fort from where the allies started. That would give them a chance to take a little rest and then make the attack a little after darkness set in."

"Yes."

"And there may be a very few men at the fort to protect it."

"Yes. But one thing; they have the cannon, and they could mow them down like grain before the sickle after they once got started."

"That is true; but the allies will not be apt to run any danger of getting in the way of those old cannon, for as old-fashioned as they are, they could create a fearful havoc if they were only aimed half right."

"Well, it is hard to tell just what the band of Blackpowder Dan is up to. But one thing I feel certain of is that if they are really going to try and capture the fort and raid the settlement, they know just what they are doing. We all know the sort of a man Lefferts is now; why couldn't he have been acting in a treacherous manner before, and have been in communication with Blackpowder Dan?"

"That sounds all right," Young Wild West admitted. "You may be right."

The movements of the half-breed were really a sort of puzzle to them.

Even Wild could not make out what it meant.

While it did not seem possible to him that the villain would dare to make an attack on the fort, there was no telling what he might do.

He had been victorious in the last two battles with the regulars, and he might have got it in his head that he could take the fort.

Then again it might be as the lieutenant said—that Lefferts was in league with the band.

But our hero did not intend to worry over the matter.

The only thing to do was to follow the band and see what they were really up to.

When noon came they were not in sight of them, but as they halted for a short rest and dinner, Wild and Jim rode on ahead to try and locate them.

The young scout's mascot accompanied them, as they were not going to ride very fast.

The two boys kept under cover of the timber belt as they rode along, and when they had covered a trifle over half a mile, they suddenly came in sight of the enemy encamped on the other side of the river and about a quarter of a mile below.

That was all they wanted to know just then, so they rode

back to their own camp and reported what they had learned.

"They must mean to go right on to the fort," said Lieutenant Ogden. "If they don't they certainly have a purpose in view in traveling in that direction."

"Well, let them go on," retorted Wild. "We will go, too. Then between us and those at the fort I guess we will make it hot for them."

When they got ready to resume the march Wild and Jim again set out ahead.

They did not want to let the allies know that they were being followed, if they could help it.

And they did not want to get too close to them, either, for they already had a taste of the fighting qualities of Blackpowder Dan.

The company of cavalry had been crippled bad enough, as it was.

The boys signaled for them to come on the moment they made the discovery that the Indians and renegades had resumed their march.

Then they kept it up all the afternoon.

Our friends were now certain that the villains were going to attack the fort.

"If we could only get there in advance of them," said the lieutenant.

"We can't do that without them seeing us," answered Wild. "That is certain."

"We will follow them up, then, and engage them in the rear when they make the attack."

"That is the proper thing to do, I should say."

When sunset came the allies were resting in a little grove half a mile from the river and within two miles of the fort.

They were so located that they could command a view of the surrounding country from every direction.

Our friends were a full mile behind them when they halted in a convenient grove at the very edge of the river to await the coming of darkness.

If it had not been for the dog Young Wild West would surely have started in a roundabout way for the fort the instant darkness came, but he did not want to take the intelligent animal with him, and if he left him with Charlie and Jim they would only be hampered by him when the fighting began.

So he decided to ride along with them and aid in the attack from the rear when the time came.

But it happened that Blackpowder Dan led his forces to the attack sooner than Wild had figured on, and when the firing began our friends were so far away that they could just hear it, and that was all.

"Forward!" cried Young Wild West. "The attack has begun!"

It would take them a good ten minutes to reach the fort by hard riding, so they lost not another moment.

When they had covered half a mile at a rattling clip Wild suddenly thought of his mascot.

In the excitement he had forgotten him, and he now slackened his speed to give the dog a chance to come up.

"Go on," he said. "I will be there in time to do my turn."

The boy had never tried to call the dog by whistling, as he had not owned him long enough to get thoroughly acquainted, but he now placed his fingers to his mouth and blew two blasts.

Then he called out: "Here, Lion," and blew again.

A short bark was the answer, and then he knew the dog understood.

In a minute or so Lion overtook him, and then after speaking to him kindly, Wild resumed his way in the wake of the cavalry.

He arrived just in time to see the allies scattering in all directions.

They had been taken by surprise from the rear, and just as the red demons were about to fire the houses in the settlement they got such a volley that they dropped the torches and fled.

Seeing that help had arrived, those in the fort came out and poured volley after volley into the ranks of the retreating band.

The rout was complete in less than ten minutes from the time Lieutenant Ogden arrived with his cavalry.

The loss of the brave defenders of the fort had been quite heavy, but the lieutenant had not lost a man, so well had he handled them.

They did not pursue the fleeing redskins and renegades very far, and along the river bank they galloped in wild disorder.

It was the third attack Blackpowder had made in the past thirty-six hours, but unlike the two that had preceded it, this one had turned out rather disastrous to him.

Young Wild West happened along in time to take part in the firing that kept the allies on the run, and he alone created havoc amongst them.

The cavalry did not pursue them, being satisfied that they had had enough of it for the present.

It was now time for Lieutenant Ogden to make his report, and he lost no further time in seeking out the commander.

When he told his story the general was so astonished that he could not open his mouth for the space of a moment.

"What?" he cried. "Do you mean to say that Lieutenant Lefferts left in that manner? Where is he? Send him to me at once."

"He cannot be found," was the word that came back, after diligent search had been made.

Young Wild West corroborated what Ogden said and gave a detailed statement of what had happened.

Then General Daniels saw through it all.

"The scoundrel!" he cried. "It was he who spiked the guns! It was he who planned the attack on us! He must be found and court-martialed without loss of time. The traitor must be shot!"

At this juncture a colored woman employed at the house of the general came up.

She was weeping bitterly, but managed to blurt out:

"Oh, Massa General! Missie Marie done can't be found nowhere. She were out rowin' when de shootin' begin, an' no one hab seed her since!"

If a bombshell had exploded in front of him the general could not have been more astounded.

In the excitement of the attack he had forgotten all about his daughter.

She was his only child, and her mother had been dead for several years.

The old man fairly worshipped her and he had been a very kind father to her.

And now to hear that she was missing right on top of what had just happened was enough to unnerve him completely.

But he managed to keep up, though dreadfully agitated.

A search was at once instituted for the missing girl, but she was nowhere in the vicinity of the fort.

With the tears streaming from his eyes, the general implored Young Wild West to go and find her.

"I have reason to believe that the traitor Lefferts is at the bottom of the dastardly piece of work," he said. "The scoundrel has been paying his attentions to her for some time."

"May I have permission to go and search for her, general?" asked Lieutenant Ogden, whose pale face wore a look of determination.

"Yes—yes!" was the answer. "Do not leave a stone unturned to find my missing daughter. If it proves to be that she has been taken away by the scoundrel Lefferts, try and take him alive and bring him to me."

Young Wild West took five minutes to think over what had happened before he set out to find the girl.

She had been out rowing when the attack was made, according to the story the colored woman told.

The thing was, then, to see if the boat could be found.

"If the boat cannot be found," he said to Charlie and Jim, "it is possible she was taken away in it."

"That's right," replied Jim. "I never thought of that. I just heard one of the men say that the boat was not where it is always kept."

"So did I," chimed in Charlie. "He said that it couldn't be found at all."

"Well, then," resumed our hero, "the thing is to find whether the boat went up or down the stream. I suppose that will be a hard matter. We will have to search in different directions, I suppose."

"The most of 'em are goin' down ther stream," said Cheyenne Charlie.

"Then we will take our chances and go up. Come, Lion! You may be of some assistance in this hunt. If there is any work to be done in the water you surely will be right in your element, for I have an idea that you can beat the world at swimming."

"He ought to hold his own at it; he is web-footed, like a duck," spoke up Dart.

Our three friends left their horses at the stables at the fort, and set out along the river bank on foot.

Young Wild West had come to the conclusion that if Lefferts had stolen the girl he would certainly take her to the band of villains he had so nearly given possession of of the fort and settlement.

The traitor would hardly dare to make for the nearest city, after what he had done, as he would soon be apprehended when a description was once sent out of his height, color of eyes, etc.

The more he thought about the matter the more our hero became convinced that the villain had taken his fair captive up the river in the boat, with the intention of joining the band when they got through raiding the place.

"Well, if that was his idea," thought the boy, "he has certainly slipped up on it, for they left much quicker than he had an idea they would, and he will not overtake them this night with the boat. And, as he has no horses, he will have to stick to the boat, or else walk."

The three kept on untiringly, peering carefully up the river every time they came to a point where it lay straight ahead for a distance.

But it was so dark that they could see nothing, and as not a sound broke the stillness of the night, there was nothing to indicate that those they were searching for were anywhere about.

The boat had had more than twenty minutes' start of them, and being an easy rowing craft, it made much better headway than a man could at walking.

Our friends were compelled to walk part of the time, too, as the shrubbery was pretty dense in places, and they had no little difficulty in getting through it.

Wild wanted to keep as close to the river bank as possible, for he thought the boat might be in some nook and its occupants hiding.

When a couple of hours had been spent in the search they began to wish they had brought their horses.

They could have ridden along the trail and waited for the boat to come up at a point five or ten miles up the river.

But it was too late to think about that now.

"We are in for it," said Young Wild West, "and we will keep on till daylight. If we do not find the boat by that time I will begin to think that we have made a mistake."

"Lefferts might have sunk the boat just to make believe that he took ther gal away in it," Cheyenne Charlie remarked.

"That is true," admitted the young Prince of the Saddle. "But I hardly think so. I am still of the opinion that he took the boat and intended to meet Blackpowder and his gang up the river somewhere. The more I think of it the more I am convinced that I am right. The traitor must certainly be in league with the half-breed, or he would not have spiked the guns at the fort, so the attack could be made without much danger. It was all a put-up job, I'll bet! Lefferts was to have the girl for the part he played in the game!"

"There is no other way to look at it, I guess," retorted Jim. "When I hear you talk that way I wonder why I had

not thought that way before. Wild, you certainly have a great way of figuring things out."

"A person needs to do a whole lot of figuring in a game like this. Just look what has happened since we set out from the fort five days ago! The very band we were after came after us. Then they come back here to our starting point and nearly destroy the buildings and massacre the people here! It is a game of turnabout, it seems, but I think our turn will come before long. We have got the redskins and renegades going now, and we want to keep them that way."

The three plodded on, keeping an eye upon the river as they went.

The minutes glided on into hours, and finally daylight came.

Young Wild West was glad of this, for he felt that they would now find the missing girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD AND HIS MASCOT TO THE RESCUE.

As soon as it was light enough Jim Dart ascended a tree and took a look around the surrounding country.

He could not see very far up the river, owing to a grove of trees, but when he turned his eyes off to the right of the river he saw smoke.

A closer look and he discerned moving forms among the trees.

Then it struck him all at once that he was looking upon the camp of Blackpowder Dan and his allied forces.

The camp was almost two miles off, but in the strong light of the clear morning he could see it plainly.

"It must be that Lefferts has got there with the girl," he thought, as he quickly descended the tree. "It is too bad, if that is the case."

When he told Young Wild West of what he had seen, our hero concluded to climb the tree and take a look himself.

When he got near to the top he saw all that Jim had told him of, and then as he turned his gaze to a small sheet of water that lay slightly to the left of the grove that hid the river from view, he saw what he took to be a boat.

It was pretty well concealed from his view, and was so far off that he did not know for a certainty that it was a boat, but he thought it was.

And there must have been a good three miles of open prairie between it and the camp of the redskins and renegades.

When he got down he told his two companions of what he had an idea he seen.

"It may be a boat or it may be a fallen tree in the water," he said. "At any rate, I think it is a boat. It looked strangely out of place, too, to see such a craft up in these wilds. If it is the boat we are looking for Lefferts has diverged from the river and entered the lake for the purpose of throwing off pursuit. Now, then, let us head for the shore of that lake."

Lion gave a low bark of pleasure when he saw his master set out again.

The dog ran and walked about as though overjoyed at the privilege of being allowed to accompany his master.

Cheyenne Charlie did not appear to have much hope of finding the boat, and the ones who were supposed to have gone off in it.

The scout seemed to feel angry because they had not brought their horses with them.

But he was not the one to say anything contrary to what Wild did.

Of course our hero could not accurately judge the distance to where he had seen what he took to be the boat as they made their way along; neither could they see the lake from the surface of the ground.

But when he judged that they were within half a mile of the place, he suggested that each take a different course, hoping thereby to settle the matter quicker.

We will follow Jim Dart, who took a course in the direction he said the lake ought to be.

And though he had not noticed it from the top of the tree, but simply had it impressed on his mind from what Wild had said, he struck it just right.

He had not walked through the grove of scattered trees very far when the glistening waters of the little lake flashed before him.

The sun had just risen, and the scene was one of beauty and freshness. Jim stepped quickly toward the lake.

He did not forget his usual caution and tread softly as he went.

In less than a minute he came to the edge of the woods, and then, as he cast a swift glance around, his eyes lighted upon the boat Wild had seen from the distance.

There it was, sure enough, a neatly modeled row-boat, with the oars lying inside it and the bow resting on the edge of the bank.

Jim Dart was as surprised as he was gratified to see it.

He made just one step to approach the boat when two men leaped from behind a clump of bushes and bore him to the ground in a twinkling.

They were the villains who had come up the river with Lefferts and the captive girl.

They had been resting there ever since two hours before daylight.

Though Jim should have been anticipating something of the kind, he was taken completely by surprise.

The sight of the boat made him forget all else just then.

He did not even get a chance to cry out, for a heavy hand was thrust over his mouth instantly.

Then the two ruffians, who were powerful fellows, picked him up bodily and carried him through the bushes for about a dozen yards.

Then the unlucky boy caught a glimpse of the captive girl.

She sat on the ground close to the trunk of a tree, with her hands tied behind her, and close to her stood the traitor Lefferts.

"Aha!" exclaimed the villain, his face lighting up as he recognized Jim. "So one of the young scouts was trailing us, was he? Any of his friends about?" and he looked questioningly at the men.

"He's all alone, cap, I reckon," replied one of them. "It's likely there's a gang close by, though."

"Ah! We will have to move soon, then. Did you see anything when you climbed the tree just now?"

"Yes," answered the other fellow. "I seen something that made me feel good. Our gang is camped about three miles from here. I seen ther smoke from their fires."

"You are sure it is our friends?"

"Yes, cap; I'm sartin of it. It is jest about where they would be likely to be. It is a snug place where ther camp is, too, an' most likely Blackpowder has halted there to give ther cavalry a fight if they should happen to come along."

"Well, I hope you are right."

"I know I'm right, cap."

"Good! Now, just tie this fellow's hands behind him and give him to understand that if he opens his mouth he will die instantly. I want to ask him a question or two."

There was no need of the man transmitting this to the boy, for he was within a few feet of the traitor when he spoke.

But the ruffian did as he was told, and then he removed his hand from the mouth of Jim.

Dart knew it would be worth his life to cry out, so he remained perfectly silent.

"Where is the cavalry?" asked Lefferts.

"At the fort, the last I saw of them," was the reply.

"Where is Young Wild West?"

"I don't know exactly."

"Is he anywhere close by?"

"He may be," answered Jim, evasively.

"You were following us?"

"Yes; I may as well admit that."

"For the purpose of rescuing the young lady?"

"I may as well say yes to that, too."

"Well, do you know what is going to happen to you now?"

"No; I do not," retorted Dart, speaking as coolly as he could.

"Well, I will show you. Blindfold him, boys!"

At this a smothered scream came from the lips of the girl, who had hitherto remained perfectly silent.

"You know what I told you," said Lefferts, looking at her warningly. "Open your mouth like that again, and you will wish you had not before you are many hours older!"

This had the effect of silencing her, and terror-stricken, she bowed her head.

"Now, then," went on the traitor, addressing the men, "as soon as you have fixed him so he can't see, take him to the bank, find a good heavy stone and tie it close around his neck. If he is allowed to see he will make more of a fuss; and if he does go to making much of a fuss, stick a knife

in him before you throw him into the water. I am going to head for the camp you saw from the tree. You know just what to do now, and when you have done it, follow me."

Then he took the girl roughly by the arm and forced her to rise to her feet.

"If the fellow goes to making too much of a fuss shoot him, if necessary," were the parting words of the villain.

Jim, blindfolded and helpless, sat there like one stupefied.

One of the men held the muzzle of a revolver against his forehead, while the other went in search of a stone to tie about his neck in obedience to the command of Lefferts.

Meanwhile the traitor was hurrying the poor girl through the woods as fast as he could go.

Jim was now thoroughly alarmed.

"See here," he said. "You fellows had better let me go. If you put me out of the way you won't live twenty minutes! I guarantee you that!"

The one who had gone in search of a suitable stone came back when he heard this.

"Who would be apt to kill us within twenty minutes?" he asked, with a slight tinge of uneasiness in his voice.

"Young Wild West!"

"I reckon he'd have a hard time in doing it."

"Oh, no, he wouldn't. He would drop both of you with his rifle if you were a mile away. You ought to know enough about him for that. He is right around here now, and he knows I came here, too. You had better untie my hands and light out, if you want to save your bacon."

The man who had the revolver in his hand placed the weapon in his belt.

The boy's words had impressed him deeply.

The two villains looked at each other for a moment and then—

They heard a crashing in the bushes along the river bank, and the next instant a big black dog came bounding toward them.

It was Lion, Young Wild West's mascot.

When Jim heard the pattering of the Newfoundland's feet and the ominous growl that came from him, a thrill of joy shot through him.

Wild was coming to the rescue.

As the dog appeared before them so suddenly one of the men drew his knife and the other picked up a stout stick from the ground.

The villain with the club made a vicious sweep at the dog, but missed.

At that instant Young Wild West appeared on the scene.

The men were astounded, but they meant to fight it out.

But it was not much of a fight that they put up.

Wild and his mascot were more than a match for the two scoundrels.

The dog sank his teeth deep into the thigh of one, while his active master caught the other by the wrist and flung him to the ground.

Cheyenne Charlie then burst upon the scene, a revolver in either hand.

"Don't either of you yell, or you'll die!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, oh!" groaned the man the dog had hold of. "Take him off, won't yer?"

Young Wild West could scarcely refrain from laughing at the villain.

"Let go, Lion!" he said.

The Newfoundland promptly obeyed, and then Charlie quickly relieved him of his weapons, after which he cut Jim loose.

As powerful a man as he was, Young Wild West had conquered the fellow he tackled in short order.

The twisting he had given his wrists had been sufficient to bring that about.

No one could withstand the grip he had.

"You are a fine pair, are you not?" he observed. "Now, then, my friend, if you don't lie right there where you are till I tell you to get up, I'll open a tunnel through the small set of brains you have in your head. Please remember that, now!"

The athletic young dead-shot got up, taking charge of the villain's revolvers as he did so.

Charlie and Jim were busy tying the other's hands when our hero turned to them.

"How did it happen, Jim?" Wild asked.

"Well, it happened so quickly that I don't just know," was the reply. "It is a good thing that you came along as you did, for they were going to tie a stone around my neck and throw me in the water. Lefferts ordered them to do it, and I was delaying them a little by talking, when Lion suddenly came through the bushes. I heard him, but could not see him, and then I knew I was all right."

"Lefferts, did you say?" exclaimed Young Wild West, as he proceeded to bind the other villain's wrists. "Jove! I forgot about him. Where is the traitor?"

"He started off with the girl about five minutes ago."

"Ah, we must catch him, then."

"He started for the camp of Blackpowder Dan, which he just learned was not far away," said Jim.

Wild had dropped his rifle when he sprang upon the man, and as soon as he had finished binding him he picked it up and then made for a tree.

Like a squirrel he went up, and both Jim and Charlie knew what he meant to do.

He was going to shoot the traitor.

But when the boy reached the top of the tree he could see no signs of either Lefferts or the girl.

"They must be keeping along in the timber strip," he said, as he descended the tree. "He certainly cannot make very fast headway with his captive."

The next instant there was a yell from the bushes to the right of them, and half a dozen Indians appeared.

CHAPTER IX.

CHEYENNE CHARLIE STARTS ON A MISSION.

The attack was so sudden that our friends were rather surprised.

"Get behind the trees, boys!" cried Young Wild West.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart lost no time in obeying. The bullets whistled all around them as they did so, but fortunately they were not hit.

Then they began to do some firing.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three of the Indians dropped in no time.

The others then acted the same as our friends had done—they got behind trees.

It was going to be what might be called a game of hide and seek now.

Young Wild West was right in his element.

If anything he did like it was meeting a redskin on terms where it took strategy to defeat him.

He watched the trees like a cat watches a mouse.

There were only three of the redskins there, but he did not intend that there should be that many very long.

Presently he saw the barrel of a rifle being slowly thrust from behind one of the trees.

Further around it moved until it was leveled at an object not quite in line with Wild.

The boy did not know what it was aimed at, but he was ready to fire the instant the rifle spoke.

He knew he would be pretty sure to get a shot at something as a move was made to withdraw the rifle.

Crack!

The Indian had fired, and as a burst of laughter was ringing out from Jim Dart, who had fooled the redskin by placing his hat on the muzzle of his rifle and pushing it out at one side of the tree, Young Wild West's rifle sounded.

A part of the redskin had become exposed, and he let go at it.

It was the elbow of the fiend, and as the bullet hit him he uttered a yell of pain and sprang out in full view.

Crack—crack!

Two reports rang out almost as one, and the red demon sank to rise no more.

Both Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart had fired.

There were only two of them left now, and these suddenly dropped to the ground and began crawling through the bushes.

The underbrush was so thick at that point that our three friends tried in vain to get a glimpse of them.

But half a minute later Wild caught sight of one of them and taking quick aim he fired.

It was a good distance that the bullet had to travel, but it went unerringly, for there was a death yell, and then all was still.

Young Wild West knew that if they stayed there long they would find themselves in a regular hornets' nest.

Once more he wished that they had brought their horses along with them.

He had not the least idea but that Lefferts had met the half a dozen Indians, and had directed them there to help the two villains put a finish to Jim.

And the traitor would surely hear the shooting and report that Young Wild West and his friends were there when he reached the camp of Blackpowder Dan.

Besides, it would not take the one redskin who had escaped long to reach the camp.

A crowd of mounted fiends would be upon them in no time.

"Boys," said Wild, "there is only one thing for us to do now, and that is to take to the boat and go down the river. We will surely meet some of the searching party before long, and then we can go back and equip ourselves for a march to the Great South Pass. Blackpowder Dan and Lefterts will not remain in this vicinity very long; neither will they pursue us very far. We cannot hope to do anything without our horses."

"An' even if we had 'em, there'd be too much odds ag'in us," added Cheyenne Charlie.

"Will the boat hold the prisoners, too?" asked Jim.

"Yes; I think it would," replied Wild. "But we have no use for them, so we will leave them here. They can go on with their hands tied behind them till they reach their crowd, or else they can chew each other loose."

The two men had been lying close to the ground while the shooting was taking place, and they moved slightly when they heard these words.

They could not help moving, so delighted were they when they heard that they were to be allowed to go.

Cheyenne Charlie looked at them and shook his head as though it seemed to him to be a foolish thing to let them go, but he said nothing, and followed his young leader to the boat.

The Newfoundland dog had been crouching behind a log until now, for his master had commanded him to lie down when the redskins first appeared.

He sprang up with a joyous bark and leaped into the boat after Young Wild West.

When Charlie and Jim were in the craft, Wild took up the oars and sent it shooting down the river.

As the current was running pretty strong that way, the boat fairly flew through the water.

The dog sat in the bow, as though he was the lookout for them. Wild's two friends laughed when they saw how earnest he was in watching the banks of the river ahead.

On went the craft, and as they rounded a bend our hero saw the two villains rise to their feet.

They were going to get away before our friends took it in their heads to come back and get them.

With a steady stroke Wild kept the boat forging ahead, only slacking up where there was a sharp bend in the stream or where the water was very shallow, and when an hour had passed they were well on their way to the fort.

Though he was not what might be called tired, he allowed Jim to take a turn at the oars, and though the boy was not as good at it as the young Prince of the Saddle, he kept up a fast gait.

When they were within five miles of the fort they came upon a party of cavalymen, who had been making a fruitless search for the lost girl on foot.

Our friends told them where she was, and then they hurried back for the fort.

It took them hardly two hours and a half to get back, though they had been all the night in going up the river.

General Daniels was in a great state of excitement when they got back, but when he had been assured by Young Wild West that his daughter would surely be rescued he felt a trifle easier.

The troopers who had gone out on "a fool's errand" had returned during the night, and another company had come in.

That made something like two hundred men at the fort.

At the suggestion of Wild the general picked out a company and placed Lieutenant Ogden in command of it.

There were just one hundred men, all told, and when they were ready to start the general said:

"Lieutenant, while I have placed you in command of the troopers, I want you to receive your instructions from Young Wild West. You will do just as he says in the matter, and if you come back with my daughter, and bring me the report that Blackpowder Dan has been killed or taken prisoner and his band broken up, you may look for a promotion to the rank of captain."

"Thank you, general," replied the courageous lieutenant. "I hope I may never come back without being able to accomplish what you have said."

"And try and bring the traitor in alive, if possible."

"Yes, sir."

Then the company set out on the mission they had before them.

They were hampered somewhat by the fact that their rations had to be cut a trifle short, but Young Wild West told them they would have to depend on shooting their meat.

The capture of the supply wagons by the Indians and renegades had crippled those at the fort not a little.

But they were bound to get along somehow.

As might be supposed, our hero took his dog with him.

He had become so much attached to Lion that he concluded to keep him right with him till he got him to his home in Weston.

A troop of cavalry does not ride at a breakneck pace when on a hundred and forty mile march, so the dog could manage to keep up with them.

The spot where Wild had located the camp of Blackpowder to be was about six miles to the northward of the pony express trail.

But when they neared the vicinity they found that the band had moved on.

They got upon the trail, however, and as it led over the prairie almost parallel with the regular route to the Great South Pass, our hero was confident that the villains were heading for their headquarters in the Green River Ridge.

He was anxious to overtake them before they reached there, knowing that it would be a difficult matter to rout them from their retreat.

Young Wild West thought over the matter, and when a halt was made that night, he had a suggestion to make to the lieutenant.

It was that a man should be sent ahead to try and find the troopers from Fort Bridger.

If he should succeed in doing so he was to tell them to lay in wait at the eastern end of the pass and attack the band of allies and try to prevent them from getting through till reinforcements came to their help.

"That is a grand idea!" said the lieutenant. "I will leave it to you to select a man for the task."

"Very well, then, it will be a toss-up as to whether it is Charlie or Jim who will go. I'll call them," and he did so.

"Which of you two wants to ride ahead of the Indians and renegades and cut them off before they reach the Great South Pass?" he asked.

"I do," came simultaneously from the pair of them.

"Well, here is the only way to settle it, then," and he took a silver piece from his pocket and held it ready to toss up.

"Heads!" cried Charlie.

It came down with the head up, and Cheyenne was the lucky one, if going on such a mission could be called lucky.

"He won fair enough," Jim said. "But I should have much liked to be the one to go."

"But you wasn't lucky, though," laughed the scout. "Now, Wild, jest tell me what I'm to do, an' I'll start at once."

"Well, you are to find the troopers from Fort Bridger, if you can."

"Yes."

"And you are to see to it that they ambush the redskins and renegades when they come along and try to keep them from getting to their retreat till we get there. That is all there is to it."

Half an hour later Cheyenne Charlie had started on the mission.

CHAPTER X.

THE LONE INDIAN WITH THE MESSAGE FROM BLACKPOWDER DAN.

It was a big jaunt that was ahead of him, but Cheyenne Charlie was not the one to think of such things, and he simply set out to get there.

He rode steadily on for the biggest part of the night, resting his horse when he felt that it was really necessary, and when morning dawned he reckoned that he had passed the enemy, so he concluded to take a rest of a couple of hours.

And that couple of hours, during which he ate some dried beef and government biscuit to allay his hunger, was a lot to the scout who was so used to roughing it under all sorts of conditions.

His horse was a very tough animal, and when he got ready to resume the journey he found the beast willing.

Charlie was following the well-beaten trail and he did not intend to diverge from it without he was compelled to by circumstances over which he had no control.

Several times he halted and scanned the prairie in the direction he thought the enemy might be, but each time he

saw not a sign to indicate that they were anywhere in the land of the living.

When noon came he stopped at a little grove where there was a spring bubbling from the rocks, and after he had quenched his thirst he gave his tired horse a chance at the grass and climbed a tree to make a survey of the surrounding country.

Almost the first thing he saw was a lone horseman riding a jaded steed over the plains, and heading in the same direction in which he was bound.

A second glance sufficed to satisfy the scout that it was a redman.

"He has been sent ahead by Blackpowder Dan, I'll bet a plug of tobacco!" muttered Charlie, as he quickly descended the tree. "I reckon I must catch him. My horse is as good as his is, anyhow, an' it won't take me more than a half-hour to overhaul him."

He was quickly mounted and heading for the distant speck that was moving to the westward.

He had not near a plain a view of the Indian as he had had from the tree-top, but when he had been riding for five minutes he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was getting nearer all the time.

And he was not riding so very hard, at that.

At the end of ten minutes he saw that he had gained rapidly.

And the lone Indian had not seen him yet.

Cheyenne Charlie patted his horse on the neck and urged him to a faster gait.

The animal responded nobly, and the distance between them began to lessen more perceptibly.

Charlie had no intention of shooting the lone Indian; he wanted to overtake him and force him to give him some information, if possible.

A couple of minutes later the red rider turned and saw him.

Then, instead of urging his steed at a faster gait, he slackened his pace.

"Ah!" muttered the scout; "he is going to wait for me. He is one of ther redskins that thinks he is able to take care of himself when ther chances are equal, I reckon. Well, I'll ride on up, an' if he don't show fight I won't drop him."

He gave his horse free rein, allowing the animal to choose its own gait, and in a short time he was within hailing distance of the Indian.

"Hello, redskin!" he called out. "Where are you goin'?"

"Ugh!" was the reply; "where paleface going?"

"I'm bound for the Great South Pass, redskin. Why didn't you answer my question?"

"It no business of paleface where red man is going."

"Oh, so it ain't none of my business, hey? Well, I reckon it are. Where's Blackpowder Dan sendin' you?"

The brave had now come to a halt, and turning his steed around, he faced the scout in a defiant manner.

"He's lookin' for fight," thought Charlie. "Well, I guess he will git all he wants before he is through with me."

But he made out that he was not on fighting bent, and in his cool and easy way he remarked:

"Don't git mad, Injun; I ain't goin' to hurt you. Now, tell me where you are goin'?"

"Ugh!"

"Don't want to tell me, hey? Well, I don't care. But I reckon you are goin' ther same way as I am, so if you ain't got no objections, we'll ride on together."

The Indian seemed to be surprised at this remark.

But he simply said "Ugh!" again, and turned his horse to let him go in the way he had been pursuing.

With a smile of determination the scout rode up alongside him.

"Been to Fort Casper lately?" he remarked.

The redskin shook his head.

"You wasn't over there last night with Blackpowder, then?"

Again there was a shake of the head.

Charlie remained silent for the space of a minute and then he suddenly exclaimed:

"See here, redskin, there's no use in foolin' any more. I am goin' to ask you a question, an' I want you to answer it straight, too. If you don't answer it straight, I'll have to drop you, that's all!" He placed his hand on the butt of his revolver as he said the last.

At this the Indian appeared to be slightly disturbed.

"What paleface want?" he said.

"I want to know what become of ther white girl ther soldier from ther fort brought to your camp this mornin'."

"Paleface maiden all right," was the quick reply, and the brave looked at the revolver the scout had his hands on.

"She is, hey? Well, what is ther measley coyote goin' to do with her when he gits to your hangout in ther mountains?"

"He make her his squaw."

"That is what I thought. There ain't no harm come to her yet, has there?"

"No. Big chief Blackpowder tell soldier wait till get to mountains; then have big time; paleface marry maiden; heap much firewater and big dance."

"Ah!" and Cheyenne Charlie was quite sure the Indian was telling the truth now. "It will be a big time when it happens, I reckon. Now, then, redskin, I know you are jest itchin' to kill me, an' I know that you ain't exactly fit to live. You've got a shooter, haven't you?"

"Yes, me got pistol," was the reply, and the red man shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then ride on ahead a dozen yards or so an' then turn around an' cut loose at me. We are both carryin' a message of importance, I reckon, an' one of us ain't to git there. Hurry up, now, an' let's see what you are made of!"

The Indian understood perfectly.

He was not a coward, either, for his dark eyes flashed, and he urged his horse forward at a jump.

Then he turned so quickly that he got the first shot in, and Cheyenne Charlie involuntarily dodged as he heard the whizz of the bullet.

But he did not lose his nerve for an instant.

Twice his revolver spoke in rapid succession and the Indian tumbled from his horse.

The scout was about to ride on when it suddenly occurred to him to search the fallen man and see if he had anything that was of importance to him.

No sooner thought of than he dismounted and was bending over his fallen foe.

Tied to the belt of the redskin he found a folded piece of paper, and it was with a nod of satisfaction that he cut it loose and unfolded it.

Then he read the following, written in a scrawling hand:

"BILL MITCHELL.—Take notice! Have all the men ready, for we might be chased in when we come. Put the Government man in the dark cave, so he can't have a show to git out of doors; and have one of the squaws to fix up a place for a white girl that is being brought with us by a friend. We have had good luck and bad on our trip, and we may have a hard time of it yet before we get home.

BLACKPOWDER DAN."

"Whoopee!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, jubilantly. "This is what I calls pretty good. I reckon you will have a hard time of it before you git home, Blackpowder Dan! It strikes me jest now that you'll never git home, without it is to your last home. Now, if Wild was only here he could tell me jest to do with this note."

He placed it carefully in his pocket, resolved to show it to the captain of the cavalry he expected to meet, and let him decide of how much importance it was.

One thing the scout knew was that he was well in advance of the band, and that made him feel as though he knew just what he was doing.

He kept on riding, resting at intervals when it was absolutely necessary for him to do so, and finally at sunrise on the second morning after leaving the fort he came in sight of the commencement of the Great South Pass.

Pretty soon he saw a cavalryman come riding out from behind a cleft of rocks in the foothills and come toward him.

Then he urged his tired horse forward to meet him.

"Whoopee!" he yelled. "I'm Cheyenne Charlie, Young Wild West sent me ahead to tell you that he's comin' along in a few hours with a troop of a hundred cavalrymen from Fort Casper. There's lively work ahead for you. Take me to ther captain, so I kin deliver my message."

"Come right on," was the reply. "We have been waiting here goin' on three days."

"Well, I reckon it is better late than never, ain't it?"

The cavalryman said he thought it was, and then Charlie was conducted to the camp, where he soon met the officer in charge and delivered his message.

The camp was situated on a little eminence that overlooked the mouth of the pass, and as the scout looked around, he came to the conclusion that they could not have selected a better place.

"I reckon you are all right here," Charlie remarked.

"Yes; we picked out the best place we could find, as we did not know what might happen," was the reply from the captain.

Charlie suddenly thought of the message he had taken from the Indian.

He quickly produced it and handed it over to the captain.

"What do you think of that?" he asked. "Is it worth anything?"

"I have no doubt that it might be worth a great deal," was the answer, when the captain had carefully read it over. "It may help us to rescue Professor Rathbun, for the 'Government man' must surely mean he."

"Yes; I thought that much myself."

"I will keep the note and try to think of something to do about the writing it contains."

"All right. If Young Wild West was only here, he would know jest what to do."

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"I have never met him," he said; "but I have heard that he is a wonderful young fellow."

"There ain't anything so wonderful about him," retorted the scout. "He is jest simply a feller that can't be beat, an' one that's good 'as gold at every stage of ther game. You'll like him, all right."

"No doubt of it."

"I know you will, 'cause I never seen an honest man what didn't."

"Thank you for your good opinion of me," and the captain smiled at the scout's blunt way of speaking.

A man had been put at work rubbing Charlie's horse down as soon as he arrived, and now when he heard the call for breakfast he made up his mind that he would be taken care of, as well as his horse, so he lost no time in getting a tin plate in his hand.

The cavalymen had plenty of rations, and Cheyenne Charlie went into the biscuits and black coffee as though it had been a long time since he had tasted such luxuries.

He was tired of venison and the like, and that sort of a meal just suited him for a change.

After breakfast he lighted his pipe and had a smoke, after which he turned in to get a good sleep, something he was sorely in need of.

It was late in the afternoon when Cheyenne Charlie awoke, and after he had taken a good wash at the brook that trickled at the side of the camp he felt like a new man.

"Say!" said he to the captain, after he had eaten something, "how would it be for me to deliver that note from Blackpowder Dan? It don't say on it who is ther feller to bring it."

"I hardly think it would be a good idea," was the reply. "It would only put them on their guard, just the same as though the Indian had delivered it."

"Yes; but I might have a chance to git the professor, as they call him, out of ther place they put him in an' land him here."

"You might; but I don't think it advisable to let them know that there is any danger at all. If you could manage to locate the hangout of the allies it would be a good thing, for we might be able to catch them unawares and take the place."

"Well, captain, I'll strike out an' try to locate ther place. I'll go right away, an' if I don't find it afore many hours my name ain't Cheyenne Charlie."

"Good! Go ahead. We have been in need of a man like you."

Cheyenne Charlie lost no time, and he was soon working his way up the mountain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ALLIES ARE ROUTED.

After a long, tedious ride Young Wild West and Lieutenant Ogden's cavalry came in sight of the mouth of the Great South Pass.

It was the night following the arrival of Cheyenne Charlie, they being something like fourteen hours behind him.

It was moonlight, and as Young Wild West pointed out the outlines of the deep split in the mountain where the pass went through, the lieutenant nodded and said:

"I am glad we are here. Now, where is the company from Fort Bridger, that is the question."

"They must certainly have got here long before this, unless something happened to them."

"Yes; that is true."

"It may be, though, that Blackpowder Dan has wiped them out by this time."

"Do you really think so?"

"Well, no; I can't say that I do think that way," and Young Wild West shook his head. "They might have made it so hot for the regulars that they drove them to cover somewhere."

"How much have the allies beaten us here, do you think?" the lieutenant asked.

"Well, I had an idea that would beat us very little. I did figure on a possibility of overtaking them before they got here."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Could it be that we have passed them?"

"It could be, but I hardly think so. You see, they have been following a route parallel with the trail, and about three miles away from it all the way along. While we could passed them and not known it, I think it is hardly probable. They would not be loafing so much as that on their route."

"That means that we are liable to be attacked at any time by the fiends."

"Well, I hardly think so. I rather think that Blackpowder would make straight for his headquarters before he did any more fighting. He must be crippled up considerably, and there is the girl captive, you know. They would not

run the risk of a dangerous encounter while they have her with them."

"Heaven grant that she is safe!" said Lieutenant Ogden, fervently. "I would give——"

He did not finish what he was going to say, for at that moment a volley of rifle shots sounded in the distance.

It was followed by another and another, and then the yelling of Indians came to their ears.

"Now you know where the villains are," said Young Wild West. "They have been attacked by the waiting cavalry, and we are just in time."

"Forward!" cried the lieutenant.

At a swift pace the cavalry darted to the rescue.

Young Wild West and Jim Dart kept in the rear.

Our hero did not want to leave his mascot behind.

They were only half a mile from the spot where the fight was taking place, and by the sound of the shooting Wild could tell that the troopers were certainly holding their own.

"They have taken the villains by surprise," he said to Jim. "I guess this will about be the wind-up of Blackpowder Dan and his dreaded gang. We want to make a complete job of it and take as many prisoners as we can."

"That's right," replied Jim. "But from all accounts, they are not the sort who let themselves be taken prisoners; they fight till the last, it is said."

"That is all nonsense. They will be glad to give in when they see that there is no hope. If we can prevent them from reaching their hiding place on the mountain when they retreat, we will surely have them."

The cavalry was now a hundred yards ahead of them.

The Newfoundland dog was holding his own with his master's horse, but he was pretty well tired out from his long journey.

"Stick to it, Lion!" cried Wild. "We want to get there before it is all over."

The dog responded with a short bark, a thing he had learned to do every time Wild spoke to him.

When his master whispered to him it was different.

He would not utter a sound, but just wag his tail.

That showed that the person who had owned him had trained him pretty well.

When the cavalry was within two hundred yards of the scene of the fighting, Lieutenant Ogden gave the word for the bugle to sound.

And when the piercing notes rang out above the noise of the firing it was immediately answered in like manner.

That told them just where the other company was.

But the two bugle calls also told the allies that they had better make themselves scarce.

They tried hard to get through into the pass.

About twenty or thirty of them did get through.

The remaining ones scattered in every direction, firing as they rode off, showing just how savage they were.

Ogden's men got a chance to do some good work, and they poured volley after volley into the ranks of the Indians and renegades.

Many prisoners were taken, but among them could not be found either Blackpowder Dan or Lefferts.

And the captive girl had not been seen.

One of the prisoners happened to be the man Lion had bitten on the bank of the lake when he and his master went to the rescue of Jim Dart.

Wild would not have recognized him if the dog had not stopped before the man and growled.

The fighting was all over now, and as our hero noticed who the prisoner was, a thought came to him.

He would try and make the fellow tell where the retreat of the band was.

But as yet he had not seen Cheyenne Charlie, and he was anxious to meet his partner.

"Fetch that fellow over here," he said to one of the men who were in charge of the prisoners.

Then he walked over to where Lieutenant Ogden was talking to the captain of the cavalry from Fort Bridger.

Jim and the dog went along, as a matter of course, the dog keeping close to the prisoner and showing his teeth almost continually.

When Ogden saw Wild approaching he promptly introduced him to the captain.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Young Wild West," the officer hastened to say, and he said it as though he meant it. "I heard all about you from Cheyenne Charlie, your friend."

"Ah!" answered Wild. "I assure you that I am very glad to meet you, too. But, if I may ask, where is Cheyenne Charlie?"

"He went out on a scout up the mountain side to endeavor to locate the headquarters of the band of Blackpowder, and he has not returned yet."

"How long has he been gone?"

"About five hours."

"It is time he was back, then," and Wild shook his head uneasily.

"Yes; I was thinking that way."

"Well, I will undertake to find him. He may have got in trouble."

"That is possible. I was just thinking of sending a small detachment to look for him when the band of allies came along."

"Well, I will go and look for him; but I want to question this fellow first."

He pointed to the villain, who was limping from the effects of the dog bite he had received.

"Go ahead and question him, and let him understand that the nearer he sticks to the truth in making his replies the better it will be for him."

"I'll tell you anything you want to know," said the man, who seemed to be suffering considerable pain from his wound. "I wish you'd put somethin' on ther ugly bite I've got. It is all swelled up, an' it hurts me so I don't know what to do."

"I will have the surgeon to look at your wound as soon

as you have answered the questions of Young Wild West," the captain assured him.

"Well, go ahead, then."

As the villain said this, Lion gave a growl.

The Newfoundland had not forgotten the man who had tried to beat out his brains with a club, and if Wild had only said the word, he would have leaped upon him and torn him to pieces.

But the boy ordered the dog to lie down and be quiet, and he was obeyed instantly.

"I don't know as there is any more than one question that I want to ask you," he said. "Where is the headquarters of your band?"

The man hesitated.

"Of course I can't compel you to answer," remarked Wild. "So if you think you will gain anything by lying or keeping still, you can do so."

"Well, I s'pose I might as well tell yer what yer want ter know," exclaimed the prisoner. "It are most likely that this are ther last of Blackpowder an' his gang, anyhow."

"You can rest assured that such is the case."

"Well, ther hang-out is about a mile up ther mountain, on ther left. You kin git to it by two ways. You kin go into ther pass for about a couple of hundred yards on ther left, an' take a kind of windin' path up to a level patch that's covered by a thick growth of pines. Then you foller a path that's there an' you'll fetch right up in ther three-cornered cut among ther rocks, where ther caves are in which our gang lives when they are to home."

"Yes; that is one way. Now, how about the other?"

"That is ther longest way. You kin go in a straight line from here, an' ther first thing you find that looks like a trail will bring you to ther place from ther hill above the three-cornered cut. It ain't hard to find, but Blackpowder has got things fixed so that after an enemy finds it he ain't apt to git away. He's got traps laid for prowlers."

"He has, eh?" and our hero shrugged his shoulders, as he thought it was just possible that Cheyenne Charlie had fallen into one of these traps.

"Yes," answered the man. "Our captain can't be beat on anything like that. He'll give you a hard fight when you get up there, but I s'pose you'll soon git ther best of him, 'cause there's only a few men what got there from ther fight here, an' about a dozen squaws an' children was all we left at ther hang-out."

Young Wild West believed the man was telling the truth.

He concluded to ask him another question.

"Where is the Government surveyor confined?" he resumed.

"In a place where it will be hard to git him."

At this the face of the captain suddenly lighted, and placing his hand in his pocket, he drew forth the paper Cheyenne Charlie had given him.

"Here," said he, handing the message to Wild. "Perhaps this might throw a little light on the subject."

"I think it may," our hero replied, after he had finished reading it. "Where did you get this, captain?"

"Your partner, Cheyenne Charlie, gave it to me on his arrival here. He took it from an Indian brave who was on his way to deliver it to the man in charge of the mountain retreat."

"Good! I think this will help us a little. Now," and he turned to the prisoner, "where is what you term the dark cave located in your hang-out?"

"Right at ther back of ther V-shaped place," was the reply.

"A hard place to reach, ain't it?"

"No; not when you know where it is. It is a sort of secret place, you know—a feller would not think there was a cave there."

"Oh, I see. Well, how can one get to it?"

"By slidin' down ther corner where it comes to a p'int a feller would land his feet right on ther flat rock what covers ther entrance to ther dark cave. All he would have to do would be to lift the flat stone one side an' step down into it. There! I've told you a whole lot now, won't yer let ther surgeon dress my wound? It hurts me awful!"

"Yes; you will be attended to right away," and the captain sent for the surgeon.

It was found that the dog bite had developed into a dangerous wound.

From being neglected, blood poisoning had set in, and the surgeon shook his head when he looked at it.

The man's limb was swollen to twice its ordinary size.

"I guess that dog bite will be the death of him," he whispered to Wild.

"Well, it was his own fault," and our hero walked away.

He held a short consultation with Jim Dart.

They soon agreed upon a plan of action.

Jim was to lead Ogden's men up to the retreat by the way through the pass, and he would take the other lot of troopers there by the longer route.

Only enough men to guard the prisoners and take care of the horses would be left behind.

Young Wild West did not know how his scheme would strike the captain of the Fort Bridger company, but he knew that Ogden would agree to it.

General Daniels had told the lieutenant to do just as Young Wild West said.

He called Ogden and told him what he had decided to do.

"Certainly," was the quick reply.

The captain was then told, and he, too, agreed to it.

"Now, then, to the rescue of Cheyenne Charlie, Professor Rathbun, and the general's daughter!" cried Young Wild West.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

As Young Wild West thought, Cheyenne Charlie had been unfortunate in his scouting trip, and had fallen in the hands of the enemy.

The scout had gone up far enough to locate the place, and he was just thinking of a way to get to the rescue of the

Government surveyor when he stepped upon what appeared to be a bed of leaves and went shooting downward like a stone.

He had walked into one of the traps the prisoner told Wild about later on.

The scout brought up with a jar that shook the breath from him twelve or fifteen feet below, and before he could get upon his feet three or four squaws appeared on the scene and quickly disarmed him.

Their shrill cries soon brought a white man and two old Indian braves to the scene.

But, though badly surprised and upset by the fall, Charlie did not lose his wits altogether.

"There!" he exclaimed. "I got into one of them holes, after all. Blackpowder told me to be on ther lookout for 'em, but you see, I'd never been here before, an' so I was bound to step jest where I hadn't oughter."

The white man looked keenly at him as he said this.

"Do you mean to say that ther captain sent you here?" he asked, incredulously.

"Why, of course he did!" exclaimed the scout, finding that he had made a point. "What would I come here for if he didn't, I'd like to know? There wasn't one of ther reds or whites that wanted to risk ridin' ahead, so I told him I would do it. I want to see Bill Mitchell right away."

"Well, I happen to be Bill Mitchell," and then the fellow looked as though he was more than half inclined to believe that the scout was telling the truth. "Let him up, there, redskins. Come on, and let's see whether you are lyin' or not, stranger."

Charlie then gave Mitchell the contents of Blackpowder Dan's letter.

Bill Mitchell looked surprised when he heard all this.

"I reckon you must be tellin' ther truth," he remarked, and then he shook his head as though he was in doubt about it.

"Of course I'm tellin' ther truth," Charlie replied.

"And he told you how to get here?"

"Yes; he told me there was a couple of ways to git up here, but I forgot what he did say, so I run my chances an' come ther way I did."

Though the scout did not know it, he said enough to convince the man that he was all right.

"The couple of ways to get there" he spoke of satisfied Bill Mitchell.

"Well," he said, a moment later, "I'll do jest as you say. But you must stay right here till ther captain comes. It won't be long afore he'll git here, I s'pose?"

"No; he ought to be along with ther gang in an hour or so. You see, he wants to git here without havin' to fight with the regulars, if he kin, on account of havin' ther gal from ther fort with 'em."

This seemed plausible, so the fellow nodded approvingly.

Cheyenne Charlie was given back his weapons, but Bill Mitchell cautioned him not to attempt to leave the place under any conditions until Blackpowder Dan arrived.

The scout was jubilant at the way his unlucky accident had turned out.

He now felt certain that he would be able to rescue the professor, if he did nothing else.

And he got right at work at it, using his keen eyes for all they were worth.

In a few minutes he saw a middle-aged man brought from a big cave and led back to the sharp corner that formed the back of the stronghold.

Charlie moved a trifle nearer and saw just how he was placed in the "dark cave."

Then he gave a nod.

He walked about the confines of the place and took in all that was going on.

He saw one of the squaws fixing up a snug nook near the mouth of one of the larger caves, of which there were several, and he made up his mind that there was where the girl captive was to be placed.

After he had been there an hour, Charlie began to grow a trifle nervous.

He was chafing to effect the rescue of the professor, whom the bandits had been holding presumably for a ransom, and get away himself, so he could lead the cavalry there and take possession of the place.

But there was not the slightest chance for him to do a thing, so well was he being watched by the braves and squaws, who, no doubt, had been commissioned to keep an eye on his movements.

After awhile Bill Mitchell came over to him, followed by another white renegade, and asked him to join in a game of cards.

There was nothing left for him to do but to obey, so he finally got interested in the game, since it was for small stakes, and he played on until he was suddenly interrupted by the sounds of firing from the direction of the mouth of the pass.

It appeared that the cavalry had taken a position that could not be seen from the retreat, and that was why the men there had not known of their presence.

"Ther fight is on, I reckon," said Charlie, a grim smile on his rugged countenance as he got up from the game.

"I reckon it is," Bill Mitchell answered uneasily.

"An' we've got to be ready to help 'em out when they come this way."

"Yes."

As Mitchell hastened to give some orders to the Indians the scout looked over in the direction of the dark cave.

It was as dark as a pocket there, and there was no one guarding the place.

Like a shadow he made for the spot.

He climbed up a little ways and then quickly slid the flat stone he had seen placed over the opening aside.

Down he dropped as quick as a flash.

"Professor!" he called out, in a low tone.

"Here I am!" came the reply, in a voice that sounded hopeful.

"I'm a friend, and I've come to git you out of here."

"Heaven be praised!" was the response.

"Are you tied?"

"Yes."

"Well, I reckon I'll cut you loose, then," and the next minute he had reached the side of the prisoner and done so.

"Now, let's git out of here."

Up they went out of the opening.

Everything about the headquarters was in confusion now.

The squaws were running to and fro in great excitement.

As one of them ran over toward them Charlie sprang to the ground and seized her.

"I want her togs for you to put on," he whispered to the professor.

Then he quickly bound the struggling squaw and gagged her so she could not make a noise.

At a word from the scout the professor took hold of her, after taking charge of the fancy blanket she wore, and dumped her into the hole they had just come out of.

"Put that on."

The professor picked up the greasy blanket and obeyed.

"Now, come on."

The old man kept close to the shadow of the rocky wall and the scout walked boldly out.

Luck was with them, for in less than two minutes they got a chance to ascend the side of the hill.

And once at the top they started hurriedly down by the way Cheyenne Charlie had come up.

But they had not gone far when they heard the clatter of approaching hoofs.

Several mounted men ascended the mountain side.

The two immediately found a place to hide, and for ten minutes they remained there, until they were satisfied that the allies had all passed them.

Then they went on down, being cautious about it, for they did not want to run into any of the gang of Blackpowder Dan.

But the way was clear, and they reached the camp of the regulars just as they were starting for the retreat.

Cheyenne Charlie was delighted when he saw Young Wild West.

In a few minutes he had learned the full situation and told what he had learned.

"Now I'll lead you right to the place!" he cried.

And he did so in much quicker time than they could have got there without him.

The result was that the band was soon at the mercy of the troopers.

Young Wild West was looking for Blackpowder Dan and Lefferts, the traitor.

Of course he wanted to find the girl, too.

As the retreat was completely surrounded he knew that it was impossible for the villains to get away.

With his mascot at his side he led the way among the caves, closely followed by Jim and Charlie and Lieutenant Ogden, who was in a fever of excitement over the anticipated finding of his sweetheart.

The cavalymen were making prisoners of those who had surrendered while the search was being made.

Suddenly the Newfoundland dog uttered an ominous growl and darted into one of the smaller caves like a shot.

The next instant a cry of mortal agony rang out; then there were the sounds of a fierce scuffle and the growls of the dog.

Young Wild West rushed into the cave, Jim Dart following with a burning brand he had snatched from the fire near by.

A startling sight met their gaze.

Lion had a man by the throat on the ground, and back in the rear of the cave stood Blackpowder Dan, holding the fainting form of Marie Daniels on his left arm, while his right hand clutched a gleaming knife, which he was about to plunge into her body.

The villain knew it was all up with him, and he meant to murder the girl as his last act upon earth.

But the knife did not descend into the quivering flesh of the fair captive.

There was a sharp crack from Young Wild West's revolver, and Blackpowder Dan staggered and fell to the ground, a bullet in his brain.

The shot had been a timely one, indeed, but Young Wild West was in the habit of being always in time.

Lieutenant Ogden sprang forward, and picking the fainting girl up, carried her outside.

Then our friends turned their attention to the Newfoundland dog and the man he still gripped by the throat.

The man wore a uniform of blue, and he was strangely still.

Jim Dart held the burning firebrand so the light could strike his face.

It was Lieutenant Lefferts, the traitor.

"Let go, Lion!" commanded Young Wild West. "You have finished the man who would have killed you for nothing had I not interfered on the day you came into camp. You have certainly been my mascot, old fellow, and I will keep you as long as I live in remembrance of how you aided me in wiping out the gang of Blackpowder Dan, if I had no other reason to keep you."

"Bow-wow!" answered the dog.

THE END:

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S CHALLENGE; OR, A COMBINATION HARD TO BEAT," which will be the next number (32) of "Wild West Weekly."

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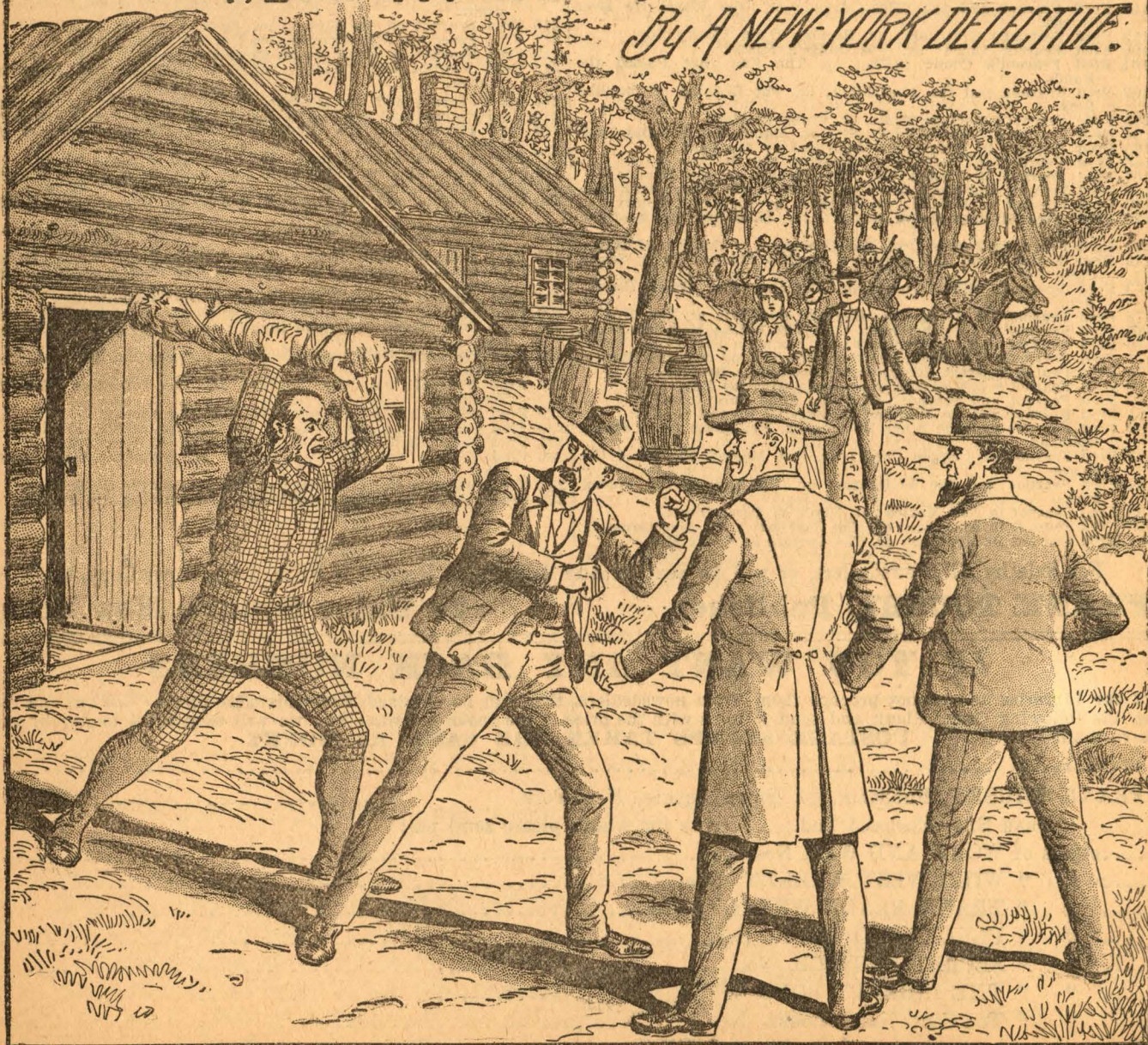
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